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# AMONG THE BANTU NOMADS

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A NUMEROUS & FAMOUS BRANCH OF THE CENTRAL  
SOUTH AFRICAN BANTU, WITH THE FIRST  
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CUSTOMS, MANNERS & BELIEFS

BY

J. TOM BROWN

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

A. R. RADCLIFFE-BROWN, M.A.

Professor of Social Anthropology  
South Africa University, Cape Town

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS & A MAP

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DEDICATED

TO

MY WIFE

WITHOUT WHOSE INSPIRATION

THIS WORK WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTED



## PREFACE

**T**HIS book is the result of forty years' study of the people called Bechuana. During those years the writer has lived among them, has observed at first hand some of the customs referred to and has gained knowledge of others through conversations in their own tongue with members of almost all the tribes mentioned in the book. It is being sent forth in the hope that it will enlighten those interested in primitive peoples and bring some knowledge to light of the fundamental belief, that lies often hidden beneath a deep crust, of a spirit world.

The subject matter has been gathered together from the people themselves and is put on record as the only means to conserve the traditions and the customs and mythology of a people whose contact with Western civilization is quickly breaking up tribal life and so changing the habits of the rising generation as to make it difficult for the research worker to ascertain what was the life lived by these interesting people at the beginning of the last century.

The writer is indebted to Prof. A. Radcliffe-Brown of the Cape University for much valuable suggestion.

Most of the photographs are the work of Mr. A. M. Duggan-Cronin of Kimberley, and the right to reproduce them has kindly been granted by the authorities of the McGregor Museum, Kimberley.

*March, 1925*

## INTRODUCTION

**T**HE author of this work, who died in the summer of 1925, lived amongst the Bechuana from 1885 until 1924. We already owe to him a revision and enlargement of the Sechuana Dictionary. Now he offers us the knowledge of the customs and history of the Bechuana that he has accumulated during his thirty-nine years amongst them.

In spite of the long period in which South Africa has been settled and governed by Europeans, we still know very little about the customs and beliefs of the native inhabitants, very little, that is, in comparison with all that might be known. Every year makes it more difficult to obtain reliable information from the natives themselves, particularly from those who, like the tribes described in this book, have to a great extent abandoned their former customs and have not preserved the traditions of their fathers. Such a book as this is therefore very welcome to all who are interested in the study of native life. It contains much information that it would now be difficult, and in some instances perhaps impossible, to obtain from native sources, records of customs and beliefs that are disappearing under the influence of contact with Europeans.

By far the greater part of the information about native life in South Africa that we do possess has been collected by our missionaries. It was often held in the past that it was no essential part of the work of a missionary to make a study of the customs and beliefs of the people amongst whom he was working.

Indeed there still survive here and there missionaries and persons connected with missions who look with disfavour on such of their colleagues as spend time and zeal in the endeavour to understand the life and thought of those whom they are working to guide into their own faith and church. The old view that the devices of the heathen are the work of the devil is even yet not quite extinct. Fortunately this dangerous and narrow-minded attitude has been largely abandoned, and it is now recognized by all the more enlightened of those who are engaged in missionary effort that for the real success of their work it is essential for them to know something, and even as much as possible, about the social and mental life of the heathen to whose betterment they have devoted their lives and energies. It is coming to be recognized also that not all native customs are bad simply because they are different from our own, and that we cannot judge such customs on merely superficial knowledge, but must first discover their real meaning and their place in the social and moral life of the people who practise them. Mr. Brown has given us, for example, a valuable description of the rites of initiation into manhood amongst the Bechuana. The real meaning of these rites in Africa generally is still obscure, and can only be discovered by the collection and comparison of the fullest possible information from as many tribes as possible. The natives themselves, of course, cannot explain the real meaning of the customs they follow, any more than the ordinary member of a civilized community can explain the real meaning of customs which he follows every day, such as shaking hands or taking off his hat. What an important part the rites of initiation play in the life of the native in some parts is attested by missionaries who find the attachment to these ancient rites an obstacle to their work. Undoubtedly the rites referred



to often contain features that are highly objectionable. But if we could thoroughly understand the meaning of the rites in general and of their various details we might well find, and there are some who think we should find, elements of high value that it would be desirable to retain. The experiment of adapting and modifying the initiation rites has indeed been tried, and apparently with great success, by missionaries in one part of South Africa. This is a good example of the new policy in missionary work, the policy not of trying to sweep away all existing custom, but of actually using it as a basis on which to build, or as a material out of which to build, by a process of modification and substitution, a better and a Christian culture, sifting the good from the bad and retaining the one while getting rid of the other. For such a policy knowledge and understanding are required as well as sympathy, and the careful study of native life becomes the prime requisite.

Another subject of which we still understand very little is the religion of the South African natives, and here again Mr. Brown brings useful additions to our scanty knowledge. One may venture to doubt, however, whether the *badimo*, the spirits of the dead, were really conceived by the Bechuana in their original condition to be "evil spirits." Of course it is mostly in times of sickness amongst men or cattle, of failure of crops or other misfortunes that the ancestral spirits come before our notice, for all such evils, when they are not regarded as the results of evil magic, are supposed to be due to the spirits, who must then be propitiated with prayer and sacrifice. But in South Africa generally these misfortunes are looked upon as punishment inflicted on the living by the dead for neglect of their social or religious duties and obligations. A father who punishes is not for that an evil father. And this dread of the punishment of offended

spirits is usually combined with some feelings of gratitude to and even of love for those who have passed away. On the whole, perhaps, the South African native fears and respects his father more than he loves him, and the same attitude perseveres after the father is dead. But this is somewhat different from what is implied in speaking of the dead as "evil spirits." It would seem quite possible that the present attitude of the natives to the *badimo* as recorded by Mr. Brown is the result, probably indirect, of European influence during the last hundred years. If so, it would seem an unfortunate result. It would have been better if we could have taught the natives to love their dead ancestors more and fear them less, rather than *vice versa*.

Mr. Brown's information about the demi-gods (*medimo*) is of great interest, for this is a subject that has been somewhat neglected by writers on South African religion. It is interesting that the same word (*-dimo*) is used with different prefixes in the singular for the Supreme Being, in the plural for the spirits of the dead, and in other singular and plural forms for the demi-gods. The stem *-dimo* itself would seem to have the connotation of invisibility. A good deal more remains to be done before we can hope to reach an adequate understanding of the conceptions of the South African native relating to the world of spiritual beings and spiritual forces.

The author's competence to speak on these matters is guaranteed by his knowledge of the language and his long and intimate acquaintance with the people. We should be grateful to him for having added so much to our knowledge of the life and thought of a people who are rapidly, perhaps too rapidly, losing the memory of the men and manners of the times of old.

A. R. RADCLIFFE-BROWN.

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# Among the Bantu Nomads

## THE BECHUANA

### CHAPTER I

#### Introductory

**T**HE term Bantu is the name given by the late Dr. Bleek to a group of languages spoken by many tribes, which, to-day, are found scattered over a very large part of the African continent, south of a line drawn from the great lakes south of the Soudan to the Indian Ocean, and extending to the southernmost point of the Cape Province. These languages are spoken by all the aborigines south of the Zambezi, with the exception of the rapidly disappearing Hottentots and Bushmen. But while the term was originally applied only to the group of languages in which the word for person is represented by *ntu* or *tho* or some kindred root, with a prefix *mo* (*motho*) for the singular and *ba* or *aba* (*batho* and *abantu*, people) for the plural, when one speaks of "The Bantu" to-day it is the peoples themselves that are meant, and the word embraces many tribes of negroid origin, each of which has its own tribal name.

It is of the Bechuana, one of the most numerous and well-known, as well as the most widely scattered tribes south of the Zambezi, that I propose to give some account, and to place on record facts relating to their life and customs, the history of the different tribes that go by that name, their religious ideas, with their mythology and folklore and a few of their many hundreds of proverbs with one or more of which their daily conversation is larded.

The Bechuana, with their southern cousins, the Basuto, and their northern relatives, the Makololo, probably form one of the largest offshoots of these Bantu peoples. They occupy the interior plains or plateau of the sub-continent of Africa, not only that part called British Bechuanaland and the Bechuanaland Protectorate, but also the Western Transvaal and parts of the Kalahari desert. Their neighbours on the west are the Ovaherero, commonly called Damaras, and the Ovambo, while on the east and south-east they border on the different branches of the Amazulu and kindred tribes. When the separation from the original parent stock of all the South African tribes began is unknown to any living member of these tribes. Whether the break took place before the general movement from the centre of the country cannot, at this late date, be decided with exactness. Nor is it possible to discover any data that would give reliable information as to whether, when the Zambezi was first crossed, the ancestors of the present Bechuana were still part of a more or less united people, or



whether advanced parties of these tribes, such as the Bakalahari and the Bataung, had not preceded the main offshoot. One thing seems certain, that for some time—how long there are no data to determine—the ancestors of the present Bechuana and Basuto were more or less united as one people, and while the Amazulu and Amaxosa branches of the Bantu family, with their vassal tribes, made their way southward along the eastern and south-eastern coasts, and the Ovaherero and Ovambo took the western route, penetrating as far south as the Orange river, the still united Bechuana and Basuto pressed their way southward through the central parts of the land till the main body reached the banks of the Vaal river. Forerunners had already gone farther south to the Orange and Modder rivers, and isolated units even travelled into the old Cape Colony, but the tribe as such never penetrated into that part of the land, nor did any of them wander as far as the coast on either side. They wandered for some time between the Zambezi and Vaal rivers. What are now the Transvaal and the Orange Free State were, for many years, the pastoral and hunting grounds of this nomadic people. Eventually, early in the last century, Moshweshwe, better known as Moshesh, gathered under his rule remnants of various tribes, which had been broken up by the raids of Moselekatse and previous Zulu chiefs, and, marching into what is now known as Basutoland, formed the Basuto nation.

As the Bechuana people grew in number and power

segments began to split off from the parent stock. Sons of a chief would break away from the main body and set up clans of their own, which in time became tribes. Men of position, greedy for power or dissatisfied with the rule of a reigning chief, would separate, taking away with them their followers, thus forming new tribes. In this way the Bakwena, the Bamangwato and the Bangwaketse tribes of the Bechuanaland Protectorate were formed from the Bahurutshe of the Western Transvaal, as also the Batlharo. The Bakaa and the Batlhaping were originally part of the Barolong tribe and the Bacweng were also an offshoot from the Barolong or Batlhaping.

The Bechuana are not a nation having one paramount chief, nor are they a confederation of tribes bound together by one common purpose, although they have a common heritage, but a number of distinct tribes, each having its own name and chief, who has jurisdiction only over his own particular people and those who have become subordinate to him. It is only in very few cases that the tribes have a common totem to-day, though there is little, if any, doubt that originally all the known Bechuana tribes had a common totem. With the exception of the Bamangwato, the tribes are not large, but Chief Khama, who died in 1923 and was the best known of all the Bechuana chiefs, ancient or modern, ruled over a large number of people, the majority of whom are Bamangwato, but under his rule and absorbed into his government were some tribes or clans not

of Bechuana race, but Mashona and Makalaka, who had become part of the tribe under the leadership of the chiefs who had preceded him. In his territory and owning his overlordship were to be found Batalaota, Baphaleng, Bakaa, Batlhokwa, Bakhurutshe, Bacwapong and Makalaka, as well as Bakalahari and Masarwa, or northern Bushmen who were serfs of the others.

From the Orange river to the Zambezi and from the Kalahari desert to the Transvaal and penetrating into both lands the Bechuana are found to-day. In the Orange Free State live part of the Barolong tribe, one of the most widely scattered of them all. In British Bechuanaland, now part of the Cape Province of the Union of South Africa, bordering on the Transvaal and extending northward for about fifty miles and westward to the Kuruman river, are the Batlhaping, an offshoot of the Barolong, while further to the north and along the Molopo river, with extensions southward to Ganyesa and Motito, are the main body of Barolong, whose acknowledged head (i.e. acknowledged by the European Government) lives at Mafeking, but whose real tribal head resides at Ganyesa. The western part of this territory is occupied by the Batlharo—an offshoot from the Bahurutshe tribe—who inhabit the country of the Kuruman river extending to the Langberg and Korannaberg ranges of hills, and into the Kalahari desert.

The tribes of the Bechuanaland Protectorate are many, but at one time they were united under the

rule of Masilo. It is said that under this ruler were also the tribes now called Basuto, but that may be only the tradition of the tribes which are eager for precedence. The separation began when the grandchildren of Masilo the First separated from the parent stem. This Masilo was the father of Malope and also, as some maintain, of Kwena, but others hold that Kwena was his second grandson and one of the four sons of Malope. While there is division of opinion as to the relationship of Kwena to Malope, there is no question with regard to that of the other three heads of the branches formed from Masilo's people. These three are known to be the sons of Masilo, the eldest being Mohurutshe, the next Ngwato and the last Ngwaketse. It is affirmed that the first to break away was Ngwaketse, who hived off with a section of the tribe and formed the Bangwaketse tribe; then followed Kwena, and with him went Ngwato, and for a time they and their following lived together, but in course of time, and under circumstances related in the history of the tribes, the Ngwato section separated, forming his own followers into the tribe called Bamangwato after him, and leaving Kwena with the Bakwena or people of Kwena. In course of time a division took place among the Bamangwato under the chief Mathibi, who, with his younger son, Tauana, separated from the elder son and brother, and leading their followers into the desert made a home at Lake Ngami and formed the tribe called after Tauana and known as the Batauana.

The Bahurutshe, who remained with Mohurutshe and were called by his name, remained in the Transvaal, and after several migrations from the site of the old camp of the once united tribe, the bulk of them settled down near Zeerust in the Transvaal, though a branch of this tribe, called the Bamalete, has its home in the territory of the Bangwaketse in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Another large tribe, the Bakgatlha, has its home in several places in the Transvaal, but the headquarters of the tribe is at Mochudi in the Bechuanaland Protectorate.

In addition to the above, which are the chief tribes of the people called Bechuana, there are several smaller branches which have broken away at various times from one or other of the larger, and, under some leading man, who has given them a clan name, have set up independent government and grown into tribes, or formed themselves into large sections of one of the larger tribes retaining their own name and totem.

Some of the above-mentioned tribes are not really Bechuana. The Batalaota are really Mashona, though continuous intermarriage with the Bamangwato for about two centuries has produced a people closely akin in blood to their Bechuana fellow-tribesmen. Others are of a mixed Bechuana and Makalaka strain. But the Bakaa and the Bacweng, though they have no territory ruled over by their own chiefs, are branches of existing tribes and were given their names by the peoples from whom they separated. Each of these names carries in itself a bit of history. Bakaa or

Bakaea means those who are at liberty to go. When the ancestors of the people bearing that name to-day wished to separate from the Barolong tribe, and it was reported to the chief, his reply was *Ba ka ea*, meaning, They can go. The Bacweng, too, got their name in a similar way. They also separated either from the main stem, or a branch, of the Barolong. When the chief heard of their departure he said, *A ba cweng*—"Let them go." And these names have stuck to their descendants to this day.

The reader will have noticed that the prefix to the name of most of the tribes referred to is *Ba*, but in one or two cases *Ma* is the prefix. *Ba* is the prefix of all the tribes that are of undisputed Sechuana origin (Sechuana is the adjective), but *Ma* is used for all alien peoples, whatever their standing, race, language or colour. The alien is never given the prefix *Mo* (singular) and *Ba* (plural), but invariably *Le* and *Ma*. This differentiation is really one to describe peoples of alien as opposed to kindred birth, and it is applied impartially to the different European nations, British included, as to the African tribes. In Southern Bechuanaland, where there has been intermarriage with the small yellow-skinned Bushmen, the terms *Morwa* and *Barwa*, used as of kindred people like the Basuto, are used ; but in the Protectorate or Northern Bechuanaland, where there has been little or no intermarriage, the cousins of the Bushmen are called *Lesarwa* and *Masarwa*. The origin of this may be that as *Ama* is the plural prefix of the nearest

alien neighbours of the Bechuana, the Amazulu, *Ma* with its singular *Le* has come to be the prefix to the name of all aliens, but there are those among the Bechuana who hold that it is not only a prefix to indicate peoples of alien, but also of inferior, birth.

I have spoken of these people as Bechuana, but when any of them alludes to himself, or refers to another member of the group, the name Mochuana, which is the singular, is never used. It is always the tribal name that is used, and no native ever calls himself by any but this tribal name. In fact, this very name Bechuana is difficult to localize. Natives do not, by any means, agree as to its meaning. One very intelligent chief told the writer that it was a name given to them by others. He stated that once, in the long ago, travellers approaching their lands asked the name of the people into whose land they would soon be entering, and received as answer, *Baa chwana*, which means, "They are like or just the same as we." But the name is not Bechuana or Baachwana, but Bacwana, which in time has become Becwana. Owing to the letter *c* having the sound of *ch* in the English word "church" this name has come to be written Bechuana.

The word Bacwana is capable of two meanings, both being derived from the verb *cwa*, which means "to come out of." The late Rev. Roger Price was of the opinion that the word meant "the little offshoots." The termination *na* is the diminutive, and so the word Bacwana would mean the little outcomers. But the present writer believes that the

more likely derivation is from *cwaana* (*cwa* to come out and *ana* the reciprocal suffix of the verb), and so Bacwaana shortened to Bacwana would mean "the Separatists," or as a native once stated, "the people who cannot hold together."

Thus the name itself is an evidence of a breaking away, whichever of the two latter derivations we accept, and this would be true whether the name was given by themselves or applied to them by their neighbours. One of the chief characteristics of these tribes, still very marked to-day where the chief does not rule with a firm hand, is the tendency to break up and hive off.



## CHAPTER II

### The Tribal Name & the Totem

WITH regard to the name by which each tribe is called, one thing stands out very clearly, and that is that in no case is the tribal name necessarily that of the totem, though in some cases, owing to the custom of naming children after the animals or current events of the day, it looks as if the people were called by their totemic name, when as a matter of fact they are named after the chief with whom their ancestors went when they formed their own tribe, or, as we have seen in the case of the Bakaa and Bacweng, as a derisive name or term of contempt. But a tribe, or especially a clan within a tribe, may bear two names, that of the ancestral chief and that of the totem. Thus the descendants of the original Bamangwato, who form the principal section of that tribe to-day, are called Baphuti after their totem, the *phuti* or duiker, as well as Bamangwato after their ancestral chief Ngwato.

In some cases where a section of a tribe has hived off from the parent stem it has kept the tribal totem while it has changed its tribal name, and in other cases while the tribal name has been continued for

## 28 The Tribal Name & the Totem

many generations the totem has been changed, and that more than once. Thus in the case of the Bakgatlha tribe, who are sometimes called the people of the Ape or Kgatlha ; their totem (*kgabo*) is not the Ape, but either the Monkey or a flame of fire, for the word *kgabo* may mean either.

The principal tribes are as follows :

*The Barolong*, which takes its name from Morolong, a chief of very long ago. They are the people of Morolong, who very probably was given a personification of the totemic name, for their totem is the *tholo* or koodoo. Morolong's son was Noto (hammer), and the Barolong not only have the koodoo as their totem but also iron (*tshipi*) and hammer. It is possible that the ancient chief was given the personified form of the totem as his name, while in the case of iron or the hammer this totem was the outcome of a reverence for Noto the chief. As we have seen, this tribe is much scattered, and part of it is in the Orange Free State, part in British Bechuanaland and part is to be found in the Bechuanaland Protectorate.

*The Batlhaping*, or people of the Fish, have not derived their name from any ancestral chief nor from their totem, for that is the same as the Barolong, the elder branch of the tribe from which they sprang, but from the fact that when residing on the banks of the Vaal, fish formed a great part of their diet, and in derision they were called the fish-eaters by the Barolong. But the tribe as such has taken the fish as an additional totem, and the conservative

## The Tribal Name & the Totem 29

members of the tribe hold fish in any form as taboo. The home of this tribe is in Southern Bechuanaland and parts of the South-western Transvaal.

*The Batlharo.* This is another of the tribes occupying part of Southern Bechuanaland. They are a branch of the Bahurutshe tribe and have retained the totem which the tribe honoured when the breach took place, viz. the baboon or *chwene*. The tribe derived its name either from Lotlhwane, the leader of the people who seceded, or from Lotlhwane, an olive tree, which was the name of the place from which the migration began. Their home is in the western part of Bechuanaland, with extensions into the Kalahari desert. They may be called the people of the Wild Olive.

*The Bahurutshe*, or followers of Mohurutshe, are probably the oldest of all sections of the Bechuana people. They are named after their chief, the son of Malope. They have had at least three totems during their history, viz. the hartebeest (*kgama*), the eland (*phobu*) and the baboon (*chwene*), which is the present totem, and has been for a century at least. But before any of these three they probably venerated the crocodile (*kwena*), which seems to have been the original totem of all the tribes. The home of this tribe is in the Western Transvaal.

*The Bakwena*, or people of Kwena, derived their name from Kwena, the son or brother of Malope. They represent the oldest branch of the tribes which hived off from the parent stem in the days when the

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original tribe represented by the Bahurutshe broke up. Although this people have the crocodile (*kwena*) as their totem they do not derive their name from it, but from their ancestral chief. There is no tradition of any other totem among the Bakwena, and in this respect they and their younger brothers, the Bangwaketse, show a wonderful contrast to some of the other tribes. The tribes of the Protectorate look upon the Bakwena as the eldest branch of the seceders from the Bahurutshe. Their land to-day is in the Bechuanaland Protectorate.

*The Bangwaketse*, whose home lies between the country of the Bakwena and Southern Bechuanaland, are named after Ngwaketse, the youngest son of Malope, who is said to have been the first to hive off, with his followers, from the parent stem, but who did not, in consequence, look upon his branch as the chief one. This tribe, like the Bakwena, have the Crocodile as their totem and, like the chief of that tribe, the chief of the Bangwaketse is addressed as Mokwena, the personified form of *kwena*, the crocodile.

*The Bamangwato*. This is the largest of all the tribes that have their home in the Bechuanaland Protectorate and their country is very extensive. They are named after Ngwato, the second son of Malope, or third if we reckon Kwena as a son and not a brother. When Kwena left Mohurutshe, Ngwato went with him, but in course of time, as the History records, Ngwato's descendant separated after a battle and, with his followers, moved northwards and north-

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westwards, where their descendants are to be found to-day. At first their totem was the crocodile, but after a while it was changed for the duiker (*phuti*). The title of the chief is Mophuti, and the descendants of the original Bamangwato are sometimes also called Baphuti, thus bearing two names, one after their ancestral chief and the other that of the totem.

*The Batawana* are the people of Lake Ngami, and are named after Tauana, a younger son of Mathibi, at one time chief of the Bamangwato. Tauana has given his name to this section of the Bamangwato, but his followers have retained the duiker as their totem, thus showing that the separation did not take place till the totem had been changed.

*The Bakgatlha* is another of the large tribes of the Bechuana people. They are the people of Kgatlha, the Ape, but their totem is either a flame of fire or the monkey. There is thus a close affinity between the tribal and totemic name. They are a scattered tribe occupying lands in the Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Transvaal.

Other tribes, with their names and totems, are :

*The Batalaota*, or people of Motalaota, a tribe of Mashona origin, living with the Bamangwato, and who have as their totem the ox (*kgomo*) and heart (*pelo*).

*The Bakhurutshe*, living on the Lake river, whose totems are the eland (*phobu*) and gemsbuck (*kukama*).

*The Baphaleng*, the people of the Mpala antelope, whose totem is the Mpala.

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*The Baseleka*, people of Seleka, the adder, who venerate the duiker (*phuti*).

*The Bapedi*, a branch of a tribe now living in the Transvaal, who have the baboon (*chwene*) as their totem.

*The Ba-Macwapong*, the people of the Cwapong hills, probably of Mashona origin like the Batalaota. Their totem is the mountain hare (*kgope*).

*The Bamalete*, a branch of the Bahurutshe, the people of Maleté, who live in the Bechuanaland Protectorate and venerate the ox (*kgomo*).

*The Batlhokwa*, who live within the Protectorate, have the ant-bear (*thakadu*) as their totem.

*The Bakaa* are found among several of the larger tribes. The meaning of this name has already been given. Their totem is the elephant (*tlou*) and iron (*tshipi*), which they took with them when they separated from the Barolong.

*The Bamokwatlheng*, people of Mokwatlheng, who venerate the giraffe (*thutlwa*).

*The Bagakwanyane*, people of Kwanyane, who have the buffalo (*nare*) as a totem.

*The Babididi*, whose totem is the porcupine (*noko*), and are sometimes called the people of the porcupine.

To these may be added the

*Bodisang*, the people of Disang whose totem is the lion (*tau*).

*Bosenakopelo*, the people of Senakopelo who venerate the African tiger (*nkwe*).

*Borankhokhwane*, the people of Nkhokhwane with the lizard (*phareng*) as a totem.

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*Boselema*, people of Selema whose totem is the snake (*noga*).

*Boithuteng*, the people of Ithuteng who venerate the hare (*mmutla*).

*The Bakalahari*, probably the earliest of the Bechuana to come south of the Zambezi, named after the Kalahari in which they dwell. They are of several tribes, each one having its own totem, of which the chief is the elephant (*tlou*).

## CHAPTER III

### The Totem

**I**T is very frequently asserted that the Bechuana worship their totems, and that the praises which are sung to the totem, together with the dance that is performed, are evidences that the totems are being worshipped as gods, tribal or clan gods; and that each tribe or clan, with a different totem, has a different god. That the totem is treated not only with respect but with reverence and oft-times with fear cannot be doubted, and among many of the Bechuana to-day the attitude to the totem is closely akin to worship. While none, or very few, would give the name of god to the totem, it seems as if the dance or song of reverence offered to it is a variant of the same thing that was prevalent among the Semites of old, and while the totem is not a demi-god, nor yet a demon, yet unto it is offered the homage, the praise and the reverence which was paid to their deities by the early Semites.

What then is the totem? And what its significance among the tribes? Among the Bechuana the totem is a group name, either given to a tribe by others to distinguish it or taken by a people for the same purpose. Each tribe has its own distinguishing name, as we have already seen in the previous chapter, and



we are not without evidence that the totem and the tribal name are not the same. The correct way to address a chief is to personify the totemic name, and if one wished to show special reverence or give great honour to a visitor it would be done by addressing him as if he was the totemic representative of one's own clan or tribe. But while that is so, there is nothing to lead one to think that at any time in their history the totem was looked upon as the original ancestor of the tribe or family in whose veins the common blood of ancestor (totemic) and people ran. No Mokwena, for instance, would claim, or allow it to be affirmed of him, that he is a blood relation of the crocodile (*kwena*) which he venerates; nor Mongwato that he and the duiker are akin, though he venerates the duiker, and his chief is called Mophuti, the man of the duiker. No Motlhaping believes for a moment that he is descended from a fish, although he is said to belong to the fish tribe (fish is *tlhapi*, hence Batlhapi).

If the totem is not a god nor a tribal ancestor, what is it? and what has called it forth? In some cases the totem was taken because of fear or wonder or amazement at the cleverness, etc., of the object totemized. In other cases it was taken as an act of gratitude for favours rendered. Some of the totems of to-day go back to the long ago of Bile, who is the Sechuana representative of the earliest man, while others are of quite modern date. In some cases when a tribe has hived off from another tribe, it has carried

its totem with it; in other cases it has changed the totem. While this is so, the veneration offered to the modern totem is the same as that offered to the ancient.

One can understand how the idea of fear and dread of an animal, or the sense of its power and size, would grow till the object became either too sacred or too dreadful to be treated in any other way than as a taboo. Or the sense of gratitude would be so great that the animal would be regarded as one to be treated with the greatest honour and deepest reverence, and, however nice its flesh might be, that to kill and eat it, or even to treat it on the same terms as other things, would be considered as "great sin." The word *go ila*, which is commonly translated "to hate," really means "to dread," and its derivatives, *go ilela*, *moila* and *seila*, mean respectively to treat as sacred or dreadful anything that is to be dreaded, either because of its sacredness—too divine for common use—or as an object of dread or danger to humanity, or of abomination to God. We are not justified in limiting the meaning of *ila* and its noun, *kilo*, to hate and hatred, and *moila* and *seila* to abominations. When a native says, then, that he *ila* his totem, what he wishes to convey is that to him it is an object of veneration or fear, and the word, with its derivatives which still carry that meaning, is a word expressive of fear of the powers and potentialities of the, to them, supernatural.

It may be interesting and instructive to know how one or two of the existing tribes got their totems.

Let us take the Bahurutshe, who are looked upon by many, if not all the other tribes, as the senior member of the family. Originally the tribe venerated the crocodile and later the hartebeest and eland, but to-day their totem is the baboon. The change from the eland to the baboon came about in this way. The leaders of the Bahurutshe people were out on a hunt and they caught a young baboon. This baboon was given into the care of the chief's younger brother, to be brought up at the cattle post. When the baboon was grown up it heard the cries of other baboons in the hills and it fled to them, and did not return. When the chief heard that the baboon had fled he called to the headquarters of the tribe his younger brother and his regiment, and disciplined them. The younger brother was very angry, and determined to make war on his brother. The battle took place, and the followers of the younger brother conquered the elder brother and his followers. On their return to the cattle post the younger brother gathered his people together, all of whom were venerators of the eland, and gave them a baboon, saying that from henceforth they were to venerate it. In course of time the younger brother became chief, and on his accession to the chieftainship the totem of the tribe was changed from the eland to the baboon. Other legends exist of the change that has taken place in the tribal totem, but all show that it is of comparatively modern times.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See also page 262 for a similar description of this story.

Another of the tribes—the Bamangwato—has also changed its totem. At one time the Bamangwato venerated the crocodile, which seems to have been the original totem of all the branches of the Bechuana peoples. The change is said to have come about in the following way. Long ago the Bamangwato were engaged in war and their chief, being driven by his enemies, fled. They followed hard on his heels and, as it was very hot, he almost fainted on the way. At last he saw in the near distance a thicket and to it he ran and hid himself therein, thinking that his enemies, who, he thought, had not seen him enter the thicket, would pass by, believing that he was still on ahead. Some were of the opinion that he was in the thicket, and when they drew near they shouted at the top of their voices, saying they had caught him. But a duiker, alarmed by the shouting, leaped from the thicket as they approached it. Seeing the duiker rush from the bush they concluded that no man had gone into it, otherwise it would not have remained there till they came up. So they passed on. After they had gone the chief came from his hiding-place, and as his life had been saved by the duiker he gave orders that from that day the duiker should be the totem of his tribe. So to-day the Bamangwato venerate the duiker. Not only is it not killed, but its skin is not used by the people for any purpose whatever. Its flesh is not eaten, and so great was the veneration or fear in which the father of the late chief of the Bamangwato held the duiker that on

seeing a duiker mat at the door of the house of a European he was visiting it had to be removed before he would enter the house. And although to-day the taboo has lost its significance for many members of this tribe I do not think any would be found who would eat the flesh or use the skin of the duiker.

There are many Bechuana to-day who think that these totems have been the tribal deities from the beginning of time. The influx of modern ideas and the intermingling of the Bechuana with other peoples, white and black, have played their part in bewildering the young people of this generation. Perhaps the best explanation of the ancient idea of the totem is that given, more than fifty years ago, by an old Mokwena, who had no knowledge of the Christian idea of God and its relation to substitutes for Him. His explanation was in answer to a question asked by one of the younger men of his tribe while the elders were gathered together in the tribal place of meeting. The question asked was whether the various totems venerated by the different tribes were originally the gods of those tribes; and the answer given by the "ancient of days" was: "Don't you, yourself, see that the different tribes venerate many different things even in your presence? Are not the Bamangwato, who venerate the duiker, of the same tribe as the Bakwena, who venerate the crocodile, and don't they venerate it even though they are in the midst of Batlharo and Barolong, who venerate respectively the baboon and the koodoo antelope now (although

at one time the Barolong venerated the lion)? These things are their venerated things; some because of ferocity, others because of gentleness, cleverness and good-heartedness; and tribes have given themselves the names of these things through trusting them, or through self-commendation: or, they have had the names given to them by others. *But it is not meant that they worship them.* Sometimes the totem may be to their praise, at other times it is an abomination unto them. The Bechuana have no god which is a creature. We look around us at the events and changes that take place and we say, 'It is He (God) who brings these to pass. He Himself who is very God.'" This old man, who had no knowledge of Christianity nor any acquaintance with the Bible, went on to say: "The Bechuana feared things and they were of the opinion that God speaks to them through the creatures and through differences in things, and through the fear of the heart. So they listen to them and exalt them. But especially do they pay heed to the heart and the body, listening also to it; dreams too are paid heed to, and fear also rules people, and so they progress, especially listening to the heart. They say the body speaks; the heart bears testimony, and is paid heed to. And the things one does not eat are things that one sometimes has found to be less nice than the things one is accustomed to eat. In other instances it is the appearance of the animal that is obnoxious or feared, like that of the crocodile, the lion, the elephant, the baboon and monkey, or the

mountain goat. These things may not be eaten, but they are not worshipped as if they were gods. It is the habits of these animals that have caused them to be venerated or feared. But though they are feared so, it must not be thought that they are as gods. Some are feared because of their strength, and their praises are sung, and they are venerated. But while the name of god and of the chief must not be used too freely, yet one notices that the names of these various totems are most freely used."

From this it will be seen that even to the average Mochuana, while the totem may be given a place of reverence or fear, it does not stand to them for a god.

Further, it may be interesting to note that there are two words used in connection with totem veneration—the one *ana*, not often heard, and the other *bina*, a word which is commonly used. This latter word means to dance as well as to venerate the totem. But dancing is part of the act of veneration. It shares in the praise that is offered. Probably the idea of dancing is a secondary meaning of the word. As we see from the Semitic customs, there was a very close connection between the two acts in ancient times; and we read in the Old Testament of David dancing before the ark as an act of reverence. From the sacred act of venerating the totem by dancing, recognizing it as embracing all the powers referred to, came the verb which expresses all forms of dancing to-day. But when the word is used to signify paying

honour to the totem the name of the totem is always used.

There are three words used to express totem—all three derived from the act of veneration, praise or surname, but no one of the three comes from this word *bina*, to dance. When it is desired to speak of that which is danced to, it is necessary to express it by a phrase. The words for totem are *seanò* (the venerated thing), *seretò* (the named thing, having a special relationship to the namer), and *sebòkò* (the praised thing). Strictly speaking, the last two may be used for crests of coats of arms.

The totems of the different tribes comprise such animals as the koodoo, the eland, the elephant, the lion, the antelope, the leopard, the duiker, the hare, the monkey, the baboon, the antbear, the snake, the lizard, the porcupine, the giraffe, the buffalo, the ox, the crocodile and such things as iron, the hammer, and the heart and entrails.



## CHAPTER IV

### The People, Family Life & Kinship

**A**NYONE who is desirous of studying the Bechuana from an ethnological point of view finds his task an extremely difficult one, owing, not only to the absence of any written records, but also to the dearth of reliable traditions. The oral traditions, such as they are, go back at most only about 250 years, and events of the far back past are often referred to as if they were only a century or two old, while many of the events of the last century, or of the eighteenth, are spoken of as being of very long ago indeed. The difficulty is increased by the fact that tribal disintegration is taking place at a rapid rate, and the last two generations have come into touch with European civilization, with the result that the present generation has not listened to the oral traditions of their race, and is ignorant of much that might have been traceable a century ago. Over and over again has the writer been met with the reply, on seeking information as to the customs, etc., of the people, that it was useless to ask such questions, as they who knew have all died.

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Much has been learnt of other ancient races from the relics left in the dust-heaps which have accumulated through the centuries, but the comparatively recent occupation of the African sub-continent by the Bantu makes it impossible to find among the dust-heaps any assistance, while the nomadic nature of the people has made the accumulation of middens, more than a century old, an impossibility. But, if the road is closed in those directions, we still have the language; and the legends, the folklore and the proverbs will prove a mine of information to the anthropologist, and investigation along the lines of the language will repay, and well repay, the patient investigator.

The present writer cannot lay any claim to a scientific equipment for the task of uncovering the roots from which the Bantu sprang, nor the ability to do more than raise slightly the veil that hides, from alien eyes, the mythology of the Bechuana peoples, but he trusts that he may be able to put younger and better equipped men on the trail, who will carry on the investigation along scientific lines, and so bring to light the secrets of the past. One source of encouragement lies in the invincible conservatism of the Bechuana, which has led them to retain many of the customs and some of the ritual of their ancestors, though the knowledge of their origin, and, in some respects, the actual words used in the ritual, have taken on a new significance.

The Bechuana, like all the Bantu, are undoubtedly

a mixed race. The student of physiognomy can easily trace in their features evidence of two or more distinct types. There are to be seen in one family, the parents of whom are closely related by blood, children differing from each other, not only in the depth of their colour, but also in feature. There seems to be no fixed type either of colour or facial appearance. They are not negroes, although there are traces of negro blood in them.

It is accepted to-day beyond doubt that at a very early stage in the world's history, long before the days of Abraham, tribes occupying the Mesopotamian valleys and Arabia made several migrations into Africa, landing somewhere on the Nubian coast. These immigrants would doubtless intermarry with whatever race they found there, even if they had reduced them to the status of serfs. From these sprang the early Egyptians, who as they moved northwards pushed out the inhabitants to a land beyond the Nile, and in time became the possessors of the land. This process of new immigrations and free intermarriage probably continued for many centuries. Some of the descendants would, by force of circumstances and hereditary love of travel, move westward and southward, and in their migrations would absorb into their ranks some of the tribes through which they passed, either through marriage or concubinage, with the result that a race partly negro, largely Hamitic or Semitic, was produced—a race represented by the Bantu of to-day. One cannot

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fail to be struck with the marvellous resemblance of many Bechuana to the mummified faces of the Egyptians of long ago. To my mind the Bantu peoples are a mixture of the descendants of Mesopotamia and primitive North African peoples, with a further mixture of negro strain.

## CHAPTER V

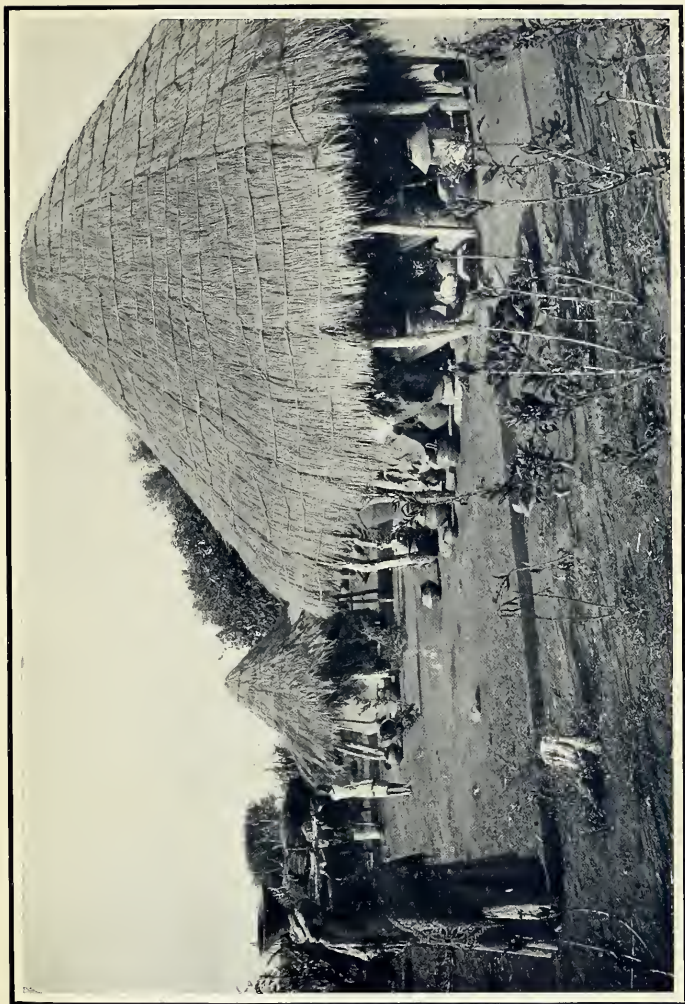
### Family Life

**T**HE family, as also the tribal, life of the Bechuana is distinctly patriarchal. At the head of the family is the father, as at the head of the tribe is the chief, who is the father of the tribe, and his "great" or chief wife the mother. So long as the father lives and has power to wield authority his word is law, and only when old age is creeping on and he finds his strength waning and his influence growing less does he yield his authority to his son, who may not be his eldest in time of birth, but, by virtue of being the eldest son of the chief wife, or wife of the "first house" as she is sometimes called, is the heir to the headship of the family. In cases where the son is still in his minority an older brother may act as the family head, or, in the event of no such brother, the uncle may take the place of the father.

Each clan or division of the tribe has its own portion of the town allotted to it by the chief, when the site of a town is fixed upon, and around the particular homestead of the chief of the clan are arranged the various hamlets of the heads of the clan,

while around the houses of these heads of hamlets are placed those of the individual families which in turn form the centre of the houses of their children. Each wife has her own house and to each house certain privileges belong according to the status of the wife. While the son of an inferior wife may take his father's place during the minority of the brother, who though junior in time of birth, is senior by virtue of his mother's status, and though he may continue to act as head of the house, when the real head has attained his majority, and even usurp the privileges of headship, the right of precedence of the son of the great wife is always recognized by the family.

The right to individual ownership of stock is either unknown or unrecognized by this people. Very rarely does one hear the term "my" used of stock, but in almost every instance the term used is one that seems to point to community of ownership. As guardian of his people the final word as to the disposal of stock, and also their removal from place to place in his country or out of it, lies with the chief, who is nominally the owner of all the cattle of the tribe. So is it with the family herds and flocks. It is the father who is the owner and custodian and who allots to each member of his household the portion that is to be accounted as belonging to that particular "house." It is largely from the common family stock, with additions from the maternal uncle, that the *bogadi*, or bride-price of daughters-in-law, is obtained, and it is to the common stock belonging to



SCENE IN A VILLAGE OF THE BECHUANA.

The large hut is built with overhanging eaves supported on poles. This space forms an out-of-doors pantry, stored with beer-pots and other utensils. The smaller building in the background is a granary (*sefala*). Tobacco plants in foreground.





each house, from which a bride goes forth, whether that of the chief or an inferior wife, that the bride-price of a daughter of the house is added, to be in turn used as the bride-price of a daughter-in-law of that house and that house only.

As a rule all the members of a "house" use the building as a sleeping place—boys and girls and often young men and maidens sharing with their elders the accommodation available. But at the rear of the mother's house, within the enclosed domestic quarters, and so under the immediate oversight of the mother, will be erected smaller houses to be used by the daughters of marriageable age. These houses, built by the girls and women, as indeed are all the houses of the tribe, are round conical and grass-thatched buildings made of wattle and daub. The huts of the Bechuana are much superior to those of other South African tribes. They are well built, are very large and cosy, cool in summer and warm in winter, and the insect life, so numerous and so irritating, is kept down by frequent application of cattle dung and earth to the floors and walls. Girls are taught such domestic duties as are necessary in their primitive life. Women are the agriculturists as well as the builders, and all the work of providing vegetable food, from the sowing of the grain to the reaping of the crop, the threshing of the maize and Kaffir-corn, the husking of it in a wooden mortar called a *kika*, with a wooden pestle, the grinding of the husked grain between two stones, one flat, on which the grain is

placed, and the other round, the cooking of the porridge and the brewing of beer, are all in their hands. At an early age they are introduced into the garden-life of their mothers, first as nurses of their younger brothers and sisters who are still in the baby stage of life, and later as helpers in the hoeing of the soil, the weeding of the growing crops, the scaring of birds from the ripening grain, as well as in the reaping and threshing. Theirs is the duty, too, of providing other vegetable food besides cereals, and a well-kept garden will show crops of beans and native pumpkins and vegetable marrows as well as melons growing in large quantities during a good season. It is no light task to keep some of the gardens free from weeds, as the grasses of the veld cling tenaciously to the ground, burying their roots deep in the earth. One special kind of grass is so difficult to uproot that its native name is "the test of the daughter-in-law."

Much of the life of the older boys and young unmarried men is spent at the cattle posts, where the life is one of freedom, but oft-times of danger, especially in those parts where beasts of prey are numerous, for the herding of the cattle consists not only of herding but of defending them from raids from the beasts of prey, by day in the open veld, and by night in the kraal. They share in the chase, and when old enough are taught the art of preparing and dressing the pelts of the deer, and the skins and furs of other animals, all of which are turned into garments for both sexes and into robes for protection from the

cold of night. The skins of most animals may be worn by any member of the tribe, but only those belonging to the upper classes of the people wear the skins of the cheetah and leopard. Many of the Bechuana men are experts with the awl, and their neatness and skill in patching a furry pelt in which there are holes so that the holes are invisible on the hairy side is remarkable, seeing that they have only an awl and the sinews of the deer with which to work.

But ingenuity is not confined to the males of the race. I have already spoken of the house-building and agricultural work of the women. But their work is not confined merely to the actual building of the house. Some women show great skill in the ornamentation of the walls and many of them are expert potters, showing not only ability to gauge the right amount of heat to use in the kiln, but ingenuity in the shapes of the pots. Others are no mean makers of baskets of various shapes from cords which they have themselves spun from the fibre of trees.

As a rule only one meal is partaken of in the day, and that is in the evening ; but the men, and sometimes the women, indulge in beer-drinking throughout the day. When the evening meal is over, the night is oft-times spent in weird singing and often in lascivious dances accompanied by the monotonous clapping of hands by the onlookers. It is no uncommon thing for the entertainment to be kept up till the early hours of the morning, especially on the nights when the moon is full.

## CHAPTER VI

### Kinship

**N**OWHERE have I found among the Bechuana any lore that would lead one to believe that they claim any kinship with the animals. In the legends relating to Creation the animals are endowed with speech, and in this respect they agree with other primitive races, but I have not found any trace, either in legend, folklore or proverb, that would lead one to think that the various totems of the tribes are looked upon as the original tribal ancestors, or in any special way related to them. Various theories have been formed as to the totem and tribal relation to it. I shall simply confine myself to saying that, as we have already seen, some of the totems are of comparatively modern date and have either been taken by an existing tribe since the separation of the tribe from the parent stock, as the Bamangwato and the Batlhaping. In no case do we find any trace of a belief that man is kin to the beasts in the sense that he is a blood relation, either in the direct or collateral line.

Tribal kinship, with all it connotes, comes through the father, when the marriage of the parents is legal, that is, according to accepted custom. A child born

of parents of different tribes belongs to the tribe of his father, and the father's totem will be the totem of the children, whether the mother's is the same or not. But if a child is illegitimate, that is, one born of a mother for whom no bride-price has been paid, then its tribal and totemic relationship will be that of the mother's family. But while children born out of wedlock, that is, children for whose mother no bride-price has even been promised, are entirely outside the authority of the father's family, and for whom that family takes no responsibility, even those born in wedlock are to a large extent under the authority of the maternal uncle. There is a custom widely prevalent, even to-day, of making a present of a young bull or some other valuable thing to the maternal uncle. The rights of a maternal uncle (*maloma*) to any of the possessions of his sister's son are based on the fact that the son has drawn his nourishment from that sister's breasts and so owes not only his life but its maintenance to his family. But the uncle has no claim upon the nephew or his possessions unless he has first shown his kinship by presenting his nephew with some suitable gift beforehand. The nephew has the right of soliciting help from the uncle in circumstances that call for such help. On the death of a man part of his possessions, especially his clothes, are presented to the maternal uncle.

One is inclined to ask if this custom of mutually giving presents between uncle and nephew is a relic of a time when descent was counted as matrilineal

rather than as we find it at present. While bigamy and polygamy are still rife, the writer cannot help concluding that the promiscuous sexual life lived by the married women among the Bechuana, and which is tacitly consented to by their husbands, is a relic of a time when their ancestresses were polyandrous. While chastity is more or less demanded of unmarried females, unfaithfulness is looked upon as a very small fault among the married.

One very significant fact as to authority is that the individual whose power seems to be greatest over a child is neither the father nor the father's people, but the mother's eldest brother. He has a large say in the question of the marriage of his nephews and nieces, and he it is who often stands as sponsor for his nephew when the time for being initiated into the franchise of the tribe takes place.

Kinship is a very sacred thing among the Bechuana, and a son born away from the ancestral home of the father has to be initiated into the family by the "blood rite" on his first visit to the home. The rite is a very simple one, but it is performed in a very solemn and sacred manner. The child with his sponsor is placed in the circle of his male relatives on the father's side. An incision is made in his forehead and also in the foreheads of the family representatives, and the blood from each is allowed to drop into a wooden vessel, thus mingling the blood of the child with that of his elders. Then incisions are made near the principal joints of the body, such

as the elbow and wrists, and into these incisions the mixed blood is rubbed and the child becomes the "blood brother" to the rest of the family and clan. After this ceremony he is allowed to have a house erected in that part of the town where his relatives live, and he becomes part of the clan. Here we seem to have the primitive idea of the blood covenant; but to-day the Bechuana rarely, if ever, carry out the rite, and there are many of the younger generation who know nothing about it.

NAMES FOR THE DIFFERENT STATES OF RELATIONSHIP  
AMONG THE BECHUANA

Ancestor or Great Grandfather (either side)	<i>Rramogolwane.</i>
Ancestress	<i>Mmamogolwane.</i>
Grandfather	<i>Rramogolo.</i>
Grandmother	<i>Mmamogolo.</i>
Father	<i>Rra.</i>
Father's brother (elder)	<i>Rramogolo.</i>
Father's brother (younger)	<i>Rrañwana.</i>
Father's brother's wife	<i>Mogatsa Rramogolo</i> or <i>Mogatsa Rrañwana.</i>
Father's sister	<i>Rrakgadi.</i>
Father's sister's husband	<i>Mogatsa Rrakgadi.</i>
Father's brother's child (elder brother)	<i>Ñwana a Rramogolo.</i>
Father's brother's child (younger brother)	<i>Ñwana a Rrañwana.</i>

Father's sister's child	<i>Ntsala.</i>	
Mother	<i>Mma.</i>	
Mother's brother	<i>Maloma.</i>	
Mother's brother's wife (elder)	<i>Mmamogolo</i>	} Same as maternal aunts
Mother's brother's wife (younger)	<i>Mmañwana</i>	
Mother's brother's child	<i>Ntsala.</i>	
Mother's sister's child (elder)	<i>Ñwana a Mmamogolo.</i>	
Mother's sister's child (younger)	<i>Ñwana a Mmañwana.</i>	
Brother, elder (m.s.) <sup>1</sup>	<i>Nkgolole.</i>	
Brother, younger (m.s.)	<i>Nnake.</i>	
Brother (w.s.) <sup>1</sup>	<i>Kgantsadi.</i>	
Sister (m.s.)	<i>Kgantsadi.</i>	
Sister, elder (w.s.)	<i>Nkgolole.</i>	
Sister, younger (w.s.)	<i>Nnake.</i>	
Spouse	<i>Mogatsa.</i>	
Husband	<i>Monna or Monona.</i>	
Wife	<i>Mosadi.</i>	
Wife's father	<i>Mogwadia.</i>	
Wife's mother	<i>Mogwadia or Mma.</i>	
Husband's father	<i>Matsala or Rra.</i>	
Husband's mother	<i>Matsala or Mma.</i>	
Wife's brother	<i>Mogwa.</i>	
Wife's sister	<i>Mogwa.</i>	
Husband's brother	Same as man's brother.	
Husband's sister	<i>Mogwakane.</i>	
Sister's husband (w.s.)	Same as sister.	
Son	<i>Morwa.</i>	

<sup>1</sup> m.s. means "a man speaking"; w.s., "a woman speaking."



Daughter	<i>Morwadia.</i>
Brother's son (m.s.)	<i>Ñwana a Mogololo</i> or <i>Monna</i> according to status.
Brother's daughter (m.s.)	Same as own or as above.
Sister's child (m.s.)	<i>Setlogolo</i> or <i>Motlogolo.</i>
Brother's child (w.s.)	<i>Setlogolo</i> or <i>Motlogolo.</i>
Sister's child (w.s.)	<i>Ñwana a Mogololo</i> or <i>Monna.</i>
Sister's child, when addresses (m.s.)	Same as own.
Grandchild, either sex (m. or w.s.)	<i>Setlogolo.</i>
Son's wife (m. or w.s.)	<i>Nwetsi.</i>
Daughter's husband (m. or w.s.)	<i>Mogwa.</i>
Brother's wife (m.s.)	<i>Mogatsa</i> , followed by name for brother.
Brother's wife (w.s.)	<i>Mogwakane.</i>
Sister's husband (w.s.)	Same as sister.

The above are the abstract terms of relationship. To apply them to concrete cases the suffixes *ka* or *ke*, *o* and *wè* or *gwè*, or the possessive pronouns *oa me* (my), *oa gago* (thy) and *oa gagwe* (his) have to be added. In the first person the prefix *mo* is changed to *n* when the relation is addressed; as *nkgolole*, my elder brother, *nnake*, my younger brother.

## CHAPTER VII

### Marriage Laws & Customs

UNLIKE some of the other branches of the Bantu, the Bechuana rarely go outside their own people for their spouses, and there seems to be no law, or taboo, forbidding the marriage of the closest relatives. A man may, and often does, take to himself the wives of his deceased father, with the exception of his own mother. Younger men take the widows of their elder brothers and, so far as the woman is concerned, the custom is obligatory. The woman belongs to the family, and may be in turn the child-bearer to the family of more than one of its members. Old men will marry the grandchildren of their brothers, and it is no uncommon thing for a girl to be given in marriage to the son of her paternal uncle, while the marriage of cross-cousins is so common as almost to be considered the general practice of the tribe. Occasionally a man may take a wife from another branch of the Bantu, but as a rule Mochuana marries Mochuana, and marriage of Bechuana and half-castes is looked upon as a serious offence.

Cross-cousins have certain claims upon each other,

the male in each case having a prior claim to the hand of the female in marriage. While this right to become the wife of her cross-cousin may not be enforced by the mother of the girl, the neglect to seek such marriage on the part of her brother would be looked upon as a great slight by her, and would almost certainly lead to family strife. If he wishes it, a male has the right to claim his female cross-cousin as his wife, with all the privileges attached to husbandhood, which privileges may be exercised before the actual ceremony.

Rarely is marriage a matter of mutual choice on the part of bride and groom. It is invariably a matter of arrangement between the elders of both; and it is no unusual thing for children to be betrothed before they are born, an agreement being made between two families that the son of one shall marry the daughter of the other, while as yet there is neither son nor daughter. So from their earliest years children are accustomed to look upon each other as already betrothed. This does not keep either from promiscuous intercourse, but the agreement will usually be carried out, even if the woman should have a child by some other man, or the man be the father of a child through some other woman.

The time for the marriage is not decided by the parties most concerned, but by the elders, and often a man is not permitted to take his wife till he has got far beyond the marriageable age. This naturally leads to many complications, and concubinage and

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paramourship are very rife. Previous to marriage both youth and maiden must have passed through the puberty rites, which carry with them ceremonial purifying, but also prepare the initiates for the consummation of the marriage function. But once these initiation ceremonies are over the adult stage is reached and, within certain limits, each initiate is free to gratify his or her desires. In the chapter dealing with the Initiation Ceremonies this matter is gone into, and there is no need to refer at length to what has become a bestial ceremony, with a licentious current running through it from beginning to end.

As far back as the Bechuana can go it has been the custom to give *bogadi*, better known as *lobola*, for a wife to the family of the woman, and without this no marriage is legal, nor any children, the outcome of the marriage, legitimate, for by it, and it alone, does the woman change her family. So long as no *bogadi*, or bride-price, is given, the woman and her offspring remain the property of her family and clan. While the Bechuana deny that the *bogadi*, that is, the cattle given by a bridegroom or his family to the family of the bride, is a purchase price paid for a wife, yet they do admit that it is a price paid for the children she may bear. It is an equivalent handed over to a family for the loss that family has sustained by the passing of a woman child of theirs into another family. Behind it lies the question of loss and the means of repairing that loss. The cattle given to a

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family enabled it to pass on *bogadi* to some other family for a wife for one of the sons. Once the *bogadi* was given, the woman, and all for which she stood as the potential mother of children, was at the disposal of the new family into which she had gone.

But before marriage there has to be a betrothal. The elders of a youth will seek a wife for him, if one has not previously been arranged for. When one is found and the arrangements are complete, which often depends, not only on the number of cattle to be given, but also on an "earnest" being handed over to ensure that there will be no going back on either side, then it will be said that the elders have caused the youth to take So-and-so (to wife being understood). Some of the tribes use a word for marriage which refers to the act of consummating the marriage, but the usual word is "taking" a wife, or "taken" as a wife.

A man may have as many wives as he can give a bride-price for, but the first wife is not necessarily the chief wife. In the case of a chief, the principal wife, and therefore the mother of the heir, is she who has been sought for him by the tribe and for it, as she is to be the mother of the tribe. Many chiefs have several wives, some as many as ten, to say nothing of their concubines. The chief wife's house is the "great house," then the houses of the others are those of the "right hand" and "left hand" houses; but however many wives a man may have, each is a legal wife if a bride-price has been given for her,

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and all the children of such are legitimate and, in proportion to the status of the mother, heirs to their father's estate. But very few of the people have more than two wives, and no inconsiderable number of them are monogamists.

Once a woman has entered into a family other than that into which she was born, she remains a member thereof until circumstances may arise which break the new bond. In the event of a husband sending his wife away for any other cause than sterility, then the *bogadi* must be looked upon as lost, and the woman returns to the possession of her own people and resumes her position as a member of her family. But should the woman leave her husband and refuse to return, and be upheld in her refusal by her family, then the *bogadi* must be returned and her freedom from bond is secured. But if a wife for whom the bride-price has been paid fails to bear children she may be returned to her family, and some other female of the family, a younger sister or even a niece, may be demanded or offered in order that the *bogadi* may remain in the woman's family and yet the contract be fulfilled. This undoubtedly shows that it is the offspring that are contracted for in the bride-price or *bogadi*. It is not a dowry of the wife, nor a price paid to her family for her possession, but an exchange to warrant the production of offspring by the bride or her family.

As already stated the woman becomes a member of the family to whom she has been transferred on the

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exchange of cattle. All business transactions having been settled, and all objections, if any, to the marriage having been removed, the father of the bride hands her a sleeping-mat and probably karosses, fur robes, and gives her to the bridegroom. A big feast usually takes place, each member of both families contributing to the food. The guests are provided with what is equivalent to the "marriage garment" of the old Jews, and only privileged guests are admitted to the joys of the feast.

If the husband dies the wife is not free to return to her parental home, nor to give herself in marriage to anyone chosen by herself. She is the "property" of her husband's family and can be handed over to the deceased husband's younger brother to become his spouse, but not to an elder brother. In the case of the deceased leaving no son she can be compelled to cohabit with his younger brother so as to raise an heir to the dead man, and any child born of this cohabitation is not considered the child of the real father, but of the deceased. But if the family do not wish the widow to become the wife of another member of the family she can be disposed of by them to some other family, and the *bogadi* is payable to them and not to the woman's family. Whatever may have been the position of women in the past, and however great her influence, to-day everything points to women being regarded from a purely utilitarian point of view.

In the case of the chief wife of a chief not bearing

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a son to her husband, but bearing one to another man after some years have passed, this son is regarded as the rightful heir of the deceased chief, and there have been cases where such a child has been placed on the stool of the chief, his sole right being that he was the son of the woman for whose bride-price as "mother of the tribe" the cattle of the tribe had been given.

The Bechuana as a rule love large families, and as has been pointed out, children will be begotten to the name of those who may have died childless or without male issue. Boy babies are more welcome than girls because the male ensures the continuance of the family and tribe, while the girls would only eventually add to the strength of some other family or tribe. But, notwithstanding the love of having children, there is also fear—supernatural fear—connected with the coming of them. The writer has heard, though no case has ever come to his personal knowledge, that among some of the more remote tribes it is a fatal thing for a woman to become an expectant mother at certain seasons of the year. Children whose paternity is unknown are frequently put to death at birth, and of course, as among many other races, infanticide is very common, the mother maintaining that as the child is the fruit of her body she can do with her own what she will. But even legitimate babies are sometimes "put to sleep" at birth, or very shortly after it. A child born with teeth is of very bad omen, and to allow it to live





BECHUANA WOMEN AT LAKE NGAMI.



would be to court ill-luck. This used also to be the case with children whose upper teeth preceded the lower. In case of twins being born one was invariably put to death. If the children were of different sex the female was the victim of their fear; if of the same sex the feebler of the two was either put to death, or left to die. Cases have been known where babies have been buried alive with their dead mothers.

In the above paragraph the writer has spoken of these customs sometimes as if they still existed, and they do still exist in the places where civilization in the shape of Christianity has not yet penetrated, but the modern traveller would pass through the length and breadth of the better-known branches of the Bechuana people and never come across a single instance of infanticide on account of the old fears.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Burial Customs

**I**N the chapter on Mythology and Folklore will be found an account given by the ancients of the beginning of death, and this chapter will merely record the actual ceremony of burial and the attitude of the relatives to the deceased.

There are two methods of burial observed by the Bechuana which have come down from antiquity, and, notwithstanding the introduction of other methods borrowed from the Europeans, are still to be found operating among them to-day. Each of these methods seems to have its counterpart in the burial customs of the early tribes of the Nile valley. The earliest method, one still observed in the burial of a chief or prominent man, where the people have not embraced Christianity, and even in many parts where Christianity has penetrated and its influence is felt in other directions, is what one may call the embryonic. The only apparent difference between the Bechuana method and that found among the earliest inhabitants of the northern parts of Egypt seems to be that while in Egypt the dead were buried bound up and laid as in prenatal life, deposited in a

horizontal position, among the Bechuana the position is perpendicular. The principal burial-place of the prominent men is the cattle kraal, but in some cases the yard of the house or even the house itself is chosen as the cemetery.

When death takes place burial is usually carried out at the earliest possible moment, and sometimes when death is seen, or thought, to be imminent, the grave is prepared beforehand. The corpse is bound in a sitting position, or perhaps it is better to say, in a crouching position, with knees drawn up to the chin and head bent down to meet the knees; the arms are bound with the hands bent back on to the upper arm, or clasping the legs below the knees. If the deceased has been dead for some time before preparation for burial can take place it may be necessary to dislocate the joints in order to place the corpse in the orthodox position. Tree fibre is used as the binders and the bound body is then placed in an oxhide. A pit is dug and into it the body is lowered in the sitting position. The grave is then filled in, each person present slowly pouring earth on to the body and around it with their hands until the grave is full. Sometimes, and especially if the deceased is of importance, a chief or chieftainess, a long stalk of grass is so fixed as to lead from the ear of the body to the earth above.

But the second method of burial would also seem to connect the Bechuana with the ancient dwellers on the Nile. I refer to what I call, for want of a better

term, the niche method. The present writer has often noticed that when burial takes place, after the grave or long and deep hole has been dug, a niche sufficiently large to hold, but only just hold, the stretched-out corpse, wrapped in skin kaross or blanket, but not otherwise bound, is dug at the side of the grave at the bottom. Into this niche the body is placed with the head pointing to the west, and the niche is then closed with stones, thus leaving an apparently empty grave. The grave is then filled in but the actual place of the corpse is not beneath the spot indicated by stones, but to the side thereof. Modern Bechuana will tell you that this is done to deceive the *baloi* (witches), who, in the shape of hyenas, would come at night and dig up the corpse. But is not this a modern explanation of the custom rather than of its origin? One remembers how there have been found under the stone tombs of Egypt wells leading to underground chambers, in which the embalmed remains of the departed have been placed to be kept or preserved so that no interruption may come to that life into which the spirit has gone. Surely one is justified in concluding that in this form of burial there is to be found a relic, though in a degenerate form, of the Egyptian custom or its progenitor. In this connection it is of interest to know that the Bechuana very often speak of burial as a "preserving" or "keeping." *Re mmolokile* (we have preserved or kept him) is a very common expression to denote that the deceased has been buried.

While the Zulus and kindred tribes believe that their ancestors pass into the bodies of snakes at death, there does not seem any such belief among the Bechuana, who, unlike those who look upon certain snakes as the abode of the spirits of their ancestors, and hence refuse to harm them, readily and with zest kill all snakes they come across, and all snakes are held in abhorrence. In no single instance has the writer come across any belief in the transmigration of the spirit.

There are many expressions among the Bechuana which indicate that, while they do not believe in a carnal resurrection, they have an implicit faith in the continuance of the personality of the spirit. The myth connecting the two-legged serpent, or lizard, with the idea of mortality so far as this life is concerned, and the corresponding one of the chameleon which is said to have been the messenger of immortality, or, at any rate, of a return to earth after death, and which is hated by all Bantu because of its slowness in delivering the message which meant so much, may or may not be a deterioration of the legends that have come down the ages, or perhaps it is itself the oldest of all, and so is the common heritage of mankind only coloured by Bantu atmosphere. In any case, the following expressions, which are not modern, nor in any sense the product of, or coloured by, Christian teaching, point to a belief that, in some form and in some place, the deceased still live.

Here are a few of the expressions referred to :

*Re tla kopana kwa loshung. Re tla kopana kwa*

*kobong* (We shall meet at death). These may only point to the grave as a common resting-place, and death or the ox-hide as the common heritage, but other expressions cannot have such a reference. *Bashwi baa bona* (the dead see); *Rrago oa gu bona* (your father sees you), spoken to any very disobedient orphan; *Lencwe ya moshwi ga le tlolwe* (the voice of the dead is not transgressed, meaning not to be treated lightly); *Tsamaea, u lalè, u robalè* (go, lie down and sleep), spoken to the dead; are all expressions indicating something different from annihilation. While *Godimo o go ileng* (It is above where he has gone) and *O ile kwa o ileng gona* (he has gone where he has gone), the former spoken of one who has deserved well of his friends during his lifetime, and the other of one of doubtful, if not of bad, character, would point to the belief that heaven is above, and that there are rewards according to the deeds done during life.

But apart from the expressions referring to the "passed," some of the customs observed when death takes place point to the belief that death does not sever entirely relationship with the living. The death wail, with its mournful tone and its piercing cry for knowledge as to where the deceased will be met with next, is surely of some import.

But the haste with which the relatives disguise their appearance is significant. Every device is applied, such as the shaving of the head, the discoloration of the face with ashes mixed with water, and the reversing of the skin mantle, to make it difficult for the deceased



to recognize his relatives, and so prevent him from venting his ill will or vengeance for slights and wrongs done to him in the days of his flesh. The custom of visiting the graves of chiefs and chieftainesses, especially those whose reputation has come down the ages, in times of drought and famine, to beseech the departed to use their influence with the gods above to send rain and harvest, is not without meaning, especially when the visit is accompanied by the throwing of water on the grave and the rattling of grain in a basket over it.

But perhaps the strongest of all evidence that the dead are believed to live is the sacrifice or offering made at the grave of an ancestor to bring about reconciliation, and so lift the curse that lies on the living, which curse is evidenced by sickness or death and misfortune generally both in the family and herds. Sickness, and even death, are never natural events to the Bechuana. Behind both lies the evil working either of a living person or of the dead, who, consciously or unconsciously, has been displeased by some neglect or actual wrong-doing of the afflicted one. At such times, when no living person seems to be guilty, the affliction is laid at the door of a displeased ancestor who is working his will from the unseen world ; hence the necessity for sacrifice and atonement. In times, too, of tribal adversity sacrifices are made and oblations offered to the chief, maybe one who long since passed away, whose anger is the cause of the adversity.

There is still one further word I should like to say

that points not only to the belief in the continuance of personality, but also fear of the departed, and that is the reluctance to call a parent by the name of a dead child, though to neglect to do so when the child was alive would be considered a slight. Is this reluctance not due to the fear that to invoke the name of the child might call forth its spirit and so bring among the living the dreaded dead ?

## CHAPTER IX

### Childhood & Adolescence

#### *Initiation Ceremonies into Manhood and Womanhood*

**C**HILDHOOD among the Bechuana may be divided into two periods for females and three for males. The earliest stage for girls is reckoned from birth till the day when she passes through the initiation ceremony which ushers her into womanhood with all the rights and privileges that are attached to that stage. This initiation ceremony usually takes place as soon after puberty as the time for holding the ceremony comes, which is usually a yearly ceremony, and is held about the same season of the year as that of the initiation of males. But while the girls pass through the initiation at any time after they have reached the age of puberty, the ceremony for boys rarely takes place before the fifteenth or sixteenth year, but there have been cases when it has taken place much earlier. Sometimes it may be earlier, and at other times it does not take place till a later age. The age is not a fixed one, for it is governed by the time at which a child or near relative of the chief is judged to be ready for the ceremony. Boys of an age near to that of

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the chief initiate enter with him. It is, therefore, not necessarily a yearly ceremony; but when it takes place it is always at the time when the Kaffir corn harvest is drawing nigh—that is, about May—and the ceremony lasts about two months. The initiation ceremony for both sexes should take place before marriage, but cases are known of men, who refused for one reason and another to pass through the initiation in their youth, submitting to the ordeal in the prime of life or even after they have passed their prime. But owing to the very nature of the ceremony as regards women I know of no case in which a woman has entered the ceremony after marriage.

(Much of what follows in this chapter has appeared in an article printed in the "Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute," Vol. 51, July–December, 1921.)

The life of a male Mochuana may be divided into three periods. First, childhood, when he wears a tiny skin apron called a *seope*, which dangles from a leathern thong which girdles the loins. The second stage begins when he has reached or is approaching the age of puberty, but is not considered ripe for the initiation ceremony. When this stage arrives his *seope* is taken away and he is given a *tsega*, which is usually made of the skin of a black-and-white or red-and-white kid. This garment, if garment it can be called, entirely covers the whole pubic and scrotal region, and passing between the legs is fastened both in front and behind to the thong that encircles his loins. This change is made the opportunity for a ceremony which may be

said to begin the novitiate of the to-be-initiated youth. He is made to lie down with face to the ground, and with body stretched out, and is then well thrashed, being reminded of the faults of his childhood. He is warned against disobedience under threats of feeling the law of the "Vultures," when he enters on his initiation. He is warned, too, against sexual intercourse, not because of any sin attached to it, nor because it is unchaste, but solely because of physical result. He is told that when the time of his initiation arrives his manner of life will be made known, obedience to the commands of his elders will be received with approval, disobedience will be met with stripes, and really bad conduct with many stripes indeed.

From this time forth the boy is always having his eyes and thoughts turned towards the initiation ceremony. Parents and guardians strive to fashion him for that day, and the lad himself is urged to get himself ready for that great occasion. This preparatory stage has no fixed formulæ. Each teacher has his own method, each his own warnings, each his own code of clean and unclean things, and each his own promises of what the end will bring. The chief and only object placed before the novice is the circumcision ceremony itself. It is solely done for him, and in his interests, in order that he may bring to pass the custom of his race, and to him that endures to the end it is a great victory, and he will receive a crowning honour.

But the steps towards the gate of manhood are

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many and difficult. It is a pathway paved with forbidden things that must be looked upon as taboo. No novice must on any consideration sit upon the sleeping mat of a woman, nor eat salt in any form. Salt is the great taboo for the novice. But apart from these there are great variations in the things forbidden. Certain foods must not be eaten, certain things must not be touched ; other things must not be done in certain ways. This is unclean ; that is an abomination. If any of these tabooed things are done, then when the day of initiation comes the novice will be eaten by the "Buffaloes," which means he will be severely punished by the leaders of the ceremony. But there are certain other things spoken of and emphasized, and they are common to all the various tribes. They refer to marriage, the physical marriage with all that it connotes. Initiation sets men and women free to indulge in sexual intercourse. If this is indulged in previous to initiation the penalty may be death or stripes, but after initiation they will be free to indulge themselves to their heart's content.

When the day of initiation comes there is great joy. The boys enter the ceremony as novices ; they will come out as initiates. They enter as boys ; they will emerge as men, taking their places in the tribal councils over the heads of the older and wiser who have not been initiated. They enter fettered ; they come forth as free men, free to treat the opposite sex as their lawful prey.

The origin of the rites of circumcision for both

sexes is hidden in the mists of antiquity. No living Mochuana seems able to give any account of it, and certainly few, if any, will give any account, even if he has the knowledge. Every road traversed, every enquiry entered upon only brings the reply that the customs, rites and ceremonies came forth with their ancestors from the Cave of Lowe, and, as they are to-day, so have they been from the beginning of time.

It is very difficult to discover whether the ignorance expressed by the Bechuana as to their past with its story, and their customs with their purpose, and their rites with their secrets, is not assumed, and the "I don't know," which is the reply so often given does not mean "I won't tell." To every question as to the meaning of things we either get the answer, "I don't know" or "It is Sechuana," i.e. a part and parcel of our life history, woven into our lives by the hand of Cose on the loom of time; and it may be that the esoteric meaning is purposely hidden from the alien and the uninitiated, from whom it is the pledged duty of the initiated to hide the inner meaning. If this expressed ignorance, real or assumed, operates in matters that do not appear to be esoteric, one can well understand not only the reluctance to tell, but also the determination to hide, from the outsider, whether of their own or an alien race, the secret ceremonies that are performed before the youths of either sex can enter into the rights, privileges, and functions of manhood and womanhood.

One leading native, whose knowledge of his people

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cannot be excelled, and whose acquaintance with their rites is based not only on the inside knowledge of the initiate, but also on the esoteric information handed down by a long ancestry of medicine men, assures me that it is a most difficult matter for anyone, initiate or other, to unfold the meaning of circumcision. It cannot be interpreted by anyone, and there is no statement connected with its intricate ceremony that holds any promise of a revelation of its inner meaning. There are many expressions, allegorical and other, used in connection with the rites of male and female initiation, but there is no stability in the expressions, nor any fixity of language.

Originally it may have been, and probably was, a distinctly religious ceremony. In some circumcision camps erections are made of a more or less conical form which may or may not suggest a phallic origin. But neither among the Southern, nor as far as I have been able to gather among the Northern, Bechuana is there any such thing to be found. Among the Bakgalagadi there are found poles erected at their circumcision camps, marked with white and black or red stripes, and ornamented at the top with a bunch of feathers or tails of animals, which they call *medimako*, and which are objects of veneration and worship. These poles take the same place among the Bakgalagadi as the Cross does among some sections of the Christian Church, and are bowed down to and revered.

There are two expressions I have heard with regard to circumcision. One is *Tlhapisho*, a washing, and



refers to the purification from youthfulness, the other is *Lesedi*, light, which I heard an old man use. At the time of the ceremony he sent his grandson, by stealth, as the boy's parents were Christians, to the circumcision ceremony, with the request that the leaders of the ceremony would not *tima lesedi*—that is, not keep from him any of the light. These two expressions may throw some light on the original ideas connected with the custom.

The circumcision rites among the Bechuana are two. That for the males is called *Bogwera*, and the other for females is called *Boyale*. Among some of the tribes there is a second edition of *Bogwera* for males called *Bogwera yoa secho*, but there are no rites attached to it, and its only object seems to be to narrow the gate of entrance into manhood, and to magnify the importance of the rite. A male initiate is called *Mogwera* and a female *Nwale*. *Rra magwera* is the person, often the younger brother of the chief, from whom permission is asked to hold the ceremony, while the chief himself is referred to as *Setlhaba-molao*, but if he is a chief who has not been circumcised then he is *Rraperepe* or the ignorant one. But the names connected with these ceremonies are mostly allegorical. The chiefs of the *Bogwera* ceremony are spoken of as *dinare* (buffaloes) or as *manon* (vultures); the thorns with which the initiates are pierced, and the sharpened sticks which are thrust into their flesh, are called *dichoshwane* (ants), *dinotshe* (bees) and *mentsane* (mosquitoes).

With regard to the actual operation on males I do not need to do more than say that the operator is one not necessarily skilled in surgery, but who is selected for the purpose by his fellow "Buffaloes." The instrument used may be knife or spear with sharpened edge. No anæsthetic is used, and the pain is so severe that the patient shrieks with agony, notwithstanding the shame of showing feeling; but he is closely held and cannot escape, and the noise of his cries is deadened by the shouting of all the crowd of previously initiated, who stand around and hide him from those to be operated upon. Nor can those, even if they hear his shrieks, escape if they wish to, for they are closely encordoned by attendant initiates. No aseptic treatment takes place beforehand and no antiseptic treatment after. Should the initiate need attention none but the ceremonially pure may assist him, and this office is usually undertaken by the old men, in whom the fires of passion are dead. Owing to their ignorance of antiseptic medicine it is no wonder that some die from the effects of the operation.

But the ceremony is far from complete when the operation has been performed. It is now the time for the *Dinare* and the *Manon*, together with their assistants, to submit the initiates to the ordeal. The ordeal consists of chastisement, of vengeance for disobedience to parents and elders during the previous years. It is to teach them, to develop them, to ensure that there shall be no rebelling against the ancient ways, or walking in strange paths. In short, it is to



GIRLS OF THE BATHOKWA TRIBE.

They are stamping maize in a *hika*, or wooden mortar. The coarse meal is afterwards winnowed and the fine product made into porridge.



bring them to the full heritage of their birthright. All this the novice had heard of during his novitiate, and he had been warned on account of the chastisement that would be meted out to refrain from disobedience and to obey all, that on this day of days he might be acclaimed as an obedient child, and so escape many stripes. The initiate is placed in the midst of the attendant lictors, and if he has been a dutiful and obedient son his good deeds, his obedience, etc., are announced by his sponsors before all the assembled host; his obedience is praised and he escapes with few stripes, for his faults have been few. But it is not so with the disobedient and wicked. They are severely punished. The faults of the wicked child are set out in detail, and he has to confess to the various acts of wrong-doing, repeating in detail all his misconduct, relating the very words of the curses he has uttered, and while he is doing so, he is beaten with the hand and with sticks and thorns, and sharp-pointed sticks are made to pierce his flesh. He is required to recite them over and over again lest he forget, while all the while the "ants" and "bees" and "mosquitoes" are made to bite him. There is no escape. He must confess in full, and the very bad are handed over to the "Vultures" aforementioned, while the moderately bad receive stripes in accordance with their deeds. At the best it is torture; at the worst it is death, for oftentimes the initiate is laid on his back with head bent back to the shoulders, and the tensely stretched throat is struck with a stick or

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the hand or a bone, and this act of chastisement not infrequently causes death. I am assured that orphans and the children of the very poor often die as the result of this treatment.

During all the time the initiate must lie at night without any covering, entirely naked, and one can realize what that must mean on the uplands of Southern Bechuanaland where the frosts are very severe in June and July. A little refuge from the biting winds is provided in the shape of a slight bush enclosure.

This treatment of the initiate goes on more or less during the whole period of the ceremony, and the theory that he must be taught endurance, and reverence for the customs of his fathers and traditions of his elders, and the maintenance of everything Sechuana, is made the excuse for thrashings with rods and piercings with thorns, and suffering generally. Before the initiate is ever the thought that all he endures is necessary to attaining to the manhood that carries with it privilege, licence and honour.

But the time is not solely occupied in these things, though every act has its significance, and each duty demanded or act prohibited contains a lesson to be learnt. Some of the time is spent in hunting, much in learning the inwardness of the ceremony. Worship which consists in shunning certain things, or in the bowing down to others, is indulged in, but there is no idea of a personality that is being worshipped, though there may be a dim idea of the spirit that underlies all things. The teaching is entirely of an

oral character and has as its medium the *dipina* or songs of the *Bogwera*, and the *dikoma* or songs of victory. The chief song is the Song of the Salt. Just as salt was the great taboo in the days of the novitiate so this song in its praise, extolling its excellences, is the great song of the *Bogwera*. Rev. Noel Roberts has given it in some fullness in his pamphlet. It is a song common to all the *Bogwera* camps.

The service of the Song of the Salt is held every morning and every evening during the time of the ceremonies. The ritual connected with it is a very elaborate one, and none but experts and the ceremonially clean can take part in it with the initiates. The arrangement, too, of the sacred place is carried out with great care, and the celebrants must wear new Sechuana shoes. The arrangement of the different partakers in this service is as follows: On one side of the sacred place rows of sacred poles are placed. These poles are used from time to time and are buried in secret places during the interval between one ceremony and the next. In these rows behind the poles are placed the initiates, each having a bundle of thin twigs closely bound together with sinew from the neck of an ox. Boys from ordinary families have bundles made up of twenty-four twigs, but the sons of the heads of the tribe have bundles containing twelve twigs only. These bundles are called by the allegorical name of *pholo ea podi* (goat rams) because the goat ram is the symbol of lawlessness. These bundles called *dithupana* are smeared with magic

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medicine before they are given to the initiates. The *dithupana* of the female initiates are made of Kaffir-corn heads. It is with these *dithupana* that the Song of the Salt is sung. Opposite to the initiates are the celebrants who must be ceremonially clean. It is they who will lead the *Moshwene* or concert. To the left of the initiates are the parents (fathers in the *Bogwera* school). Behind the celebrants, and at some distance, are placed the widowers, while on the right of the initiates, and separated from them by a thick bush hedge, are the initiated who are ceremonially unclean.

The service is considered a sacred one, and after each office the elders retire to their homes to come back to the camp when the hour for the next office arrives. It consists of a continuous beating of the poles by the initiates with their *dithupana*. Should any initiate forget what he is doing, or carried away by curiosity or excitement fail in his part of the service, then his elder, standing among the parents of the others, will strike him with a rod he holds in his hands. As long as the service lasts the beating of the poles is continued. The Bakaa tribe use tortoise-shells in place of the poles, and after the ceremony is over these shells are buried in a secret place, only to be unearthed when the next ceremony comes round. During the service the Song is sung. One of the celebrants will sing a line and the initiates are then required to say "Ho-o-o," and then repeat what the celebrant said, but if he forgets to keep on



with the beating of the *dithupana*, he is punished as I have said. At the close of the Song the poles are stacked like soldiers stack their rifles, to be unstacked again when the next service begins. The language of the Song is allegorical, and under various names is an exaltation of the sexual organs. In both ceremonies the object seems to be to excite the passions.

The songs sung and taught to the initiates during the ceremony are distinctly obscene, and it is doubtful if any one of them is free from indecent suggestion. The practices of the barnyard are almost openly referred to, and in some cases with unmistakable language. In short, the whole atmosphere in which the initiate lives is lascivious, and the suggestions of the songs, if not their actual language, are incentives to passion. As a native whom I can trust, and one who is not a foe to his people, says: "There is nothing so filthy as the language of the songs of the circumcision rites of both sexes." The songs of the *Bogwera* are saturated with reference to the female organ of generation, and the songs of the *Boyale* to that of the male. Purity of thought would appear to be impossible, while impurity of life is distinctly suggested, if not inculcated. All womankind is the hunting ground of the initiate, with the exception of his mother and her daughters. Concubinage and paramourship are held up as commendable, and so long as the parties are agreeable, promiscuous intercourse between the sexes is not condemned. But this licence is confined to the initiates alone; the uncircumcised

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are bulls and steers, and just as castration has a modifying effect on the animal operated upon, so *Bogwera* claims to keep in bounds the sexual passions. May I say in passing that the making of eunuchs is not unknown among the Bechuana. I have it on unimpeachable authority that the great grandfather of the present chief of the Bakwena was put to death by his people for practising this cruelty on some of his people and wanting to do it on more.

It has been claimed for the circumcision ceremonies that they are schools in which are taught self-restraint, morality, reverence for elders and obedience to law. But this claim is not borne out by actual facts. Self-restraint is urged upon the novice because of the physical consequences of self-indulgence, but the initiate is given licence to do what he will from that day in which he hears his elders say: "I give you manhood, my own manhood." This is said to them while in the ceremony, and what applies to the males applies with equal force to the females who receive their womanhood. The actual words used are "*Ke gu naea bonna, bonna yoa me te youò.*" "*Ke gu naea bosadi, bosadi yoa me ke youò.*" So that the initiated man is the prey of the woman, as the woman of the man. This surely disposes of the claim to the teaching of self-restraint.

With regard to morality other than sexual, they are taught that the uncircumcised are the lawless, the incorrigible, who do not conceal things, but blurt them out, who do not hide the truth, but tell it, and

who actually follow things up to discover the truth of them, and truth is the "head-breaker" (*Boamarure bo thuba tlhogo. Sephatlha*).

Obedience to law is not taught to the initiated, nor do the songs contain much, if anything, to encourage law-keeping. One of the *Bogwera* songs says *Molao sekhutlo, moelwa o ea*, which is interpreted to mean: "The law has an ending, or comes to an end, if it doesn't it can be left behind. Persistent refusal to abide by the law conquers eventually, and constant breakings of it will wear it out." The law is evanescent, temporary. What is permanent is the tribal life. Reverence for the past is certainly inculcated; it breathes in the system of the rites, it throbs in their ceremonies. Kings and laws come and go, but "Sechuana" is eternal. There is no teaching of law, none of the righteousness of people, nor any teaching of veneration. There are many teachings that praise wickedness, the honouring of concubinage, and one's uncle and strangers. There is much teaching regarding the cattle, and to steal, but none that holds up law as that by which communities live and prosper. In its place is reverence for antiquity, aversion from change, conformity to traditional custom, and the completeness of Sechuana manhood and womanhood as embodied in the circumcision rites. But there must be no change. As things were in the days of long ago, so they are to-day, so they must remain. They do not change and they must not be changed; there must be no attempt to change them.

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It is the new people who change things. Words, too, must not be revealed, nor examined into. That which has gone has gone. The wicked one is he who tries to get behind them. A man must do as his forbears did, speak as they spoke, and speak, whatever it may be, even though it be very wrong. Nor must any question be asked of the elders or any things strange and new said to them which might reveal their ignorance. To do so is *Tshita*—that is, to ask about or speak of something too great for the younger generation. Things remain; they don't pass away, they don't change. As the parents found them, so will the children strike against them. As the saying is: "*Se beecwe kgomo se padile se sale se cwa kwa Looè*," which may be interpreted to mean: "The unconquerable things have been such ever since the beginning."

Before the ceremony comes to an end the initiates are given to the chief, who accepts them for the tribe and gives them a name as a regiment, by which they are afterwards known. He emphasizes the laws of the *Bogwera*, establishes what the tribe has done, and accepts them into the freedom thereof.

All the youths who pass through the ceremony at the same time are members of this regiment. Whatever may be a youth's age, his status is that of the regiment, and in seeking to know the age of anyone it is usual to ask to what regiment he belongs. This is the only way of getting even an approximate idea of his age, as no one keeps account of years. So it is

not asked "How old are you?" but, "To what regiment do you belong?" One of the rules of the regiment is its solidarity. If one member sins the whole regiment is guilty. If one obtains honour the whole regiment is honoured through him. But more than that, any punishment meted out for a fault falls on the whole regiment. The writer has known of a whole regiment being fined for the fault of one of its members. When the chief wants work done he does not call out individual men, but a regiment, and that he usually calls for through the regimental head. Even in those districts where the initiation ceremonies are dying, or have died out, the regimental system is still in force.

All that has been said of *Bogwera* may be said of the companion rite of *Boyale*, except of course, with regard to the actual operation.

In connection with these ceremonies there are several demi-gods or their representatives. Some of the names are Dipuduñwane, Leokaoka, the god who has all things under his notice, Magaga, Magome, a female, whose mouth is smeared with tortoise milk; Rradikgaratlhane, a female dressed in dry skins which rattle as she walks; Thobege a Phacwa, a one-legged god; and Tintibane, the god in whose names oaths are taken, by wetting with spittle the forefinger of the right hand and holding it up in the air, saying, "ka Tintibane" (by Tintibane). An oath of determination to carry out at all costs the purpose set before one is to swear "Ka phogwane ea Tintibane, ñwana

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oa Modimo ” (by the crown of the head of Tintibane, child of God).

At one part of the ceremony, or, as some say, in a second ceremony, there is erected a tall pole, mention of which has already been made in an earlier part of this chapter. It is coloured in black-and-white rings with tails of the civet cat ornamenting the top. Some are of opinion that this pole is a close associate, if not the actual descendant, of the Ashera of the Old Testament. This pole is called a *modimako*.

## CHAPTER X

### Religious Beliefs of the Bechuana

**T**HE religious belief of the Bechuana is not the simple thing a superficial acquaintance with the people might lead one to suppose, nor is the absence of temple or altar or any material object of worship an evidence of no religious belief at all. Idols are non-existent, nor have I ever come across anything that could be considered a fetish, unless the *modimako* of the second initiation ceremony of males can be considered as one. A religion is there, and it is a strange mixture of the lowest form of animism, with a view of the Most High God that closely approximates to the monotheistic faith of the average Hebrew of early Old Testament days.

Fear plays a large part in their religious beliefs, but fear will not account for the whole of their faith in the supernatural, and it would appear to the writer that there are at least two distinct streams of religious belief running through their faith, now side by side, now intermingling.

*Cattle and Tree Worship.*

At one time some of the ancestors of the Bechuana must have been worshippers of cattle. There are no herds of sacred cattle found among them as were found among the Ovaherero, but the place that cattle hold in their life is not accounted for by the fact that they form the wealth of the people, and in a strict sense are not a private, but a social possession. The present writer has, in his early years of residence among the Bechuana, both seen and heard the cattle of a kraal being extolled by song and dance; and on one occasion he saw a man burning incense at the gate of the cattle fold for the avowed purpose of propitiating the unseen spirits so that his herd might increase, and for protection for them from wild beasts and disease. Occasionally, though very rarely, in these modern days, one hears of a sacred animal of the bovine species, called *kupe*. This is an animal that has been dedicated to divine honours and, because of that, it is on no account to be killed, but permitted to roam about until natural death claims it. Any ox or cow may thus be set apart, and to him who sets it apart and to those of his family and clan it is looked upon as a god or as belonging to the spirits.

Sometimes an animal will be found striking the ground with its tail as it lies in the cattle kraal at night. When this happens it is looked upon as a bad omen, the animal is said to be bewitching the place, and it is invariably put to death if the owner is a man



of wealth, or sold if he is poor. When one listens to the ribald songs of the initiation ceremonies, especially those connected with the ceremony for males, one finds that some of these songs are phrased in language that refers to the herd, and the colours of animals, both male and female, are mentioned. But to-day cattle are prized rather for their commercial value, and the importance that owning a large herd lends to the owner. Whatever may have been their one time sacred character, or however largely they may have figured in the worship of the long ago, all knowledge of any sacredness connected with them, apart from the mistiness connected with the *kupe*, is unknown to the present generation. There may be some significance in the name given to the bellowing of a slaughtered animal, which has a very close relationship to that used for praising a chief or god. The dying wail is said to be to *bòkòlela*, while to praise is to *bòka*. The philologist will easily recognize the relationship of the two words, the former being in all probability a double prepositional form of the latter, and, because of its form, a very intensive word for praise. To-day it has only the meaning of to howl or wail or utter bitter cries, but originally it may have meant the dying shout so dear to the ears of the gods.

Sometimes one hears of a native who makes for himself a god by raising a little mound of earth, and in it planting a reed or stalk which has been pulled up by the roots. This he will worship; before it he will pour oblations of Kaffir beer, and unto it he

may even offer sacrifices. At times one meets with cases wherein a hunter or traveller finds himself in a position of great difficulty or is struck with great fear. Such an one will seek for himself a tree, the largest he can find, and prostrate himself before it in prayer. If one asks what he is doing, the only reply is that he is praying, but whether to the tree, its spirit, or the spirit of the grove no one is able to say. Even to this day it is a common sight on entering any Bechuana town to see numbers of stones placed between the forked branches of the trees on each side of the road, and your native servant may add to the number of stones by placing his there. They have been placed there by men entering the town on some important mission or by some suppliant of the chief, and this stone-placing is an act of supplicating the goodwill of the spirits and so procure the success of their object.

Occasionally one meets with individuals who have been made into gods, or have exalted themselves into that position, and to them offerings are made and reverence given. It is not unusual for a suppliant to refer to the one whose aid he is seeking as his god; but all such cases are merely the application of a term for deity to a human being from whom help is solicited. In the case of the self-made or fellow-made deities there is always a strong material influence at work. It is not difficult to see how, down the ages, the term *modimo* (god) has been applied to things connected with the worship of a god, until the thing

itself has come to be looked upon, not as a symbol for deity, but deity itself. This is seen in the pole called *modimako*, which is erected at the time of the second initiation ceremony. To many, *modimako* is no longer a mere pole connected with a religious ceremony, but is the *god* of that ceremony. To the uninitiated the pole, the mystery of which they have only heard of, takes shape and develops into a god; so, if to-day you ask what *modimako* is, you often get the answer: It is a god. This answer is given not only by the uninitiated but even by many of the initiated who have had impressed upon them the sacredness and mystery of the pole.

Running through the beliefs of the Bechuana to-day there is an idea of God; but I think it is not only possible, but probable, that much of this higher faith has always been esoteric, and kept within the circle of the higher aristocracy, the royal families and their offshoots, and the order of doctors. While this last suggestion is incapable of proof, it is safe to say that there lies buried, or, at any rate, unrecognized to any large extent, beneath the more common ideas of polytheism or polydemonism, an idea of God which, so far as *modimo* (god) is concerned, is monotheistic. And this monotheism closely resembles that of the races which have placed one god at the head of a hierarchy.

The hierarchy, according to Bechuana lore, consists of a god (*modimo*) with several demi-gods, who are referred to as *medimo*. These are followed in order

of precedence by the *badimo*, whose chief is Dimo or Diñwe, while in the rear come the spirits of the dead. In addition to these there are the totems of the different tribes and their branches, and to each of these groups in the hierarchy I would draw your attention.

## CHAPTER XI

### Religious Beliefs (*continued*)

#### *The Ancestor*

IT is commonly asserted that all the Bantu tribes are Ancestor worshippers and that their gods were at one time or another the ancestors of the present generation. It is also asserted that when death takes place the ancestor becomes a member of the *badimo*; but such a statement does not seem to be warranted, as no native ever speaks of his immediately deceased relatives, especially parent or grandparent, as one of the *badimo*. They are always spoken of as *ba ba re tlogetseñ* (they who have left us), or *ba re sa tlholeñ re na nabò* (those who are no longer with us). As a matter of fact, no Mochuana ever speaks of his deceased father or mother as being dead, but only as the one who has left us, or who has passed away, or gone. It is true they may speak of any stranger who has died as a *moshwi* (dead one) and collectively couple the dead as being among the *medimo* (demi-gods). When we come to speak of the *badimo* (spirits), who are to be distinguished from *didimo* (ghosts, or apparitions), we shall see

that certain of the dead do become members of that portion of the *badimo* class which is inimical to man.

Fear of the dead, whether one's own relatives or others, does, however, play an important part in the life of the living Mochuana, who believes that the dead have power over the lives of the living to bless or to curse, to send prosperity or the reverse to their relations and members of their clan; especially is this fear potent when the living are conscious of any reason why the deceased should bear ill-will. It is for this reason that a widow will disguise herself and her children by smearing the face with ashes and by wearing their skin mantles outside in. They will cut off all their ornaments, unstring their beads, and, after throwing away the string, restring them on a new cord. Many forms of sickness, the onslaught of adversity and ills in general, are laid at the door of the offended spirit, and what may appear to be ancestor worship is simply acts of propitiation, sacrifices of atonement, which are intended to reconcile, and bring back into harmonious fellowship the severed kinship. This will be quite apparent when I come to deal with the healing and purification rites. But one may ask, is not the sprinkling of water over the grave of a great person during drought, or the rattling of a basket with grain over the grave, just before the ploughing season, an act of worship? I am assured by natives whose knowledge I can rely upon that this is no more than an intimation to the spirits of the

dead that rain is needed for harvest, and, as the spirits of the dead are nearer to the gods than living men, by this means their help as mediators is sought, so that the great god, at whose will the elements are, may become favourably disposed and cause the rain to fall. It may be that the sacrifices, as the rain or other doctors may decide, are offered to the departed spirits, but such offerings can scarcely be taken as acts of worship to a deity, but akin to offerings made at the shrine of some saint. After much enquiry I have come to the conclusion that the attitude of the ordinary Mochuana towards the dead is on a footing with that of the devout of some higher forms of faith, who, while they adore their saints and oft-times fear them, only look upon them as mediators, and do not place them in any pantheon as gods to whom worship is due. There is much in common between the petitions at the grave of a dead ancestor among the Bechuana and those made before the shrines of saints of other faiths. The attitude of the Mochuana at the grave of his ancestor, immediate or more remote, is one of reverence and awe. Fear fills mind and heart—fear of the unknown powers—fears lest they be inimical. So far as I have been able to gather, it is never love, never thanksgiving, never the desire for communion with the deceased, never even a longing for a renewal of fellowship, that calls forth their offerings and sacrifices, but always the fear that kinship with all it connotes has been severed and must be recovered. The offering made at the grave, or the

animal slaughtered there, is the mode by which the reconciliation is effected, the propitiation made and the reunion—the happy reunion—brought about. In this sense, and in this sense only, can the Bechuana be said to be Ancestor worshippers.



## CHAPTER XII

### The Badimo

THE next step in our consideration of the religious thought of the Bechuana takes us into a more spiritual atmosphere and will deal with the relation of spirits and demi-gods to human life. There are two words used by the Bechuana to describe these supernatural beings, viz. *badimo* and *medimo*. Now both these nouns are in the plural, and both have a connection with and possibly are derived from a verb *dima*. The former is the personal plural and does not have a singular form. When one wishes to use the singular it is necessary to speak of one spirit as “*oa ga Diñwe*,” i.e. one of Diñwe’s people. The latter word (*medimo*) is impersonal and neuter, and is never used in any personal way.

The *badimo* have, as their chief, one called sometimes Dimodimo and at other times Diñwe. In almost every respect he is the equivalent of Satan, and he is always spoken of as a person. It is well to remember this, for, as we shall presently see, these *badimo* are the spirits of the dead—sometimes beneficent, but generally malignant. But *medimo*, and its singular *modimo*, is always expressed by the impersonal and neuter pronoun, and yet whenever that pronoun is used it conveys not an abstract quality, but a

personal and concrete. It may be well to say here that very often the dead are collectively spoken of as *medimo*, though one dead person would never be called a *modimo*. The termination *dimo* which is seen in these words is also the termination of *legodimo* (heaven), *sedimo* (a ghost) and *ledimo* (a fierce wind). But are these terminations derived from a verb *dima* or is the verb itself derived from the nouns? The general trend of Bechuana philology would incline one to affirm that the noun terminations are from the verb. Let us try, then, to understand what this verb *dima* means. I have to confess that I have not yet been able to meet with any native who can give me a satisfactory explanation of the word. Some of its derivatives help us to understand to what it may refer, but the present generation, even though they are better educated than their predecessors, do not seem to be able to unfold the force the word had to their ancestors. I have heard it interpreted as expressive of the power of going into the very heart of things, a penetrating and all-pervading power, a perfect knowledge of the hidden and mysterious. It carries with it the idea of superiority, but also that of creating and originating. When God—not one of the demi-gods, but GOD—is spoken of, one sometimes hears the expression *Modimo o o dimañ* (God who originates or pervades or creates). *Modimo*, then, would be the one who goes into the heart of the things he has created, originated, or brought into being. He is the *mo-dima*, the one who *dimas*, and this has

come to be *modimo*. The *medimo* are not gods equal in being and position and power with the one God, but manifestations of Him. But like God, they too are classed as impersonal, though they have personal attributes. Some of these *medimo* are of higher rank than others, while some are so closely connected with earthly and material things as to suggest that they result from the apotheosis of mythical human beings.

The *badimo* are different. They are personal spirits, or so closely connected with human life as to share in it. They are mostly, though not exclusively, hostile to humanity, and it is remarkable that to them, but more especially to their chief, is attributed enmity to the human race. The *badimo*, however, are not gods, not even demi-gods, but they have a place in the spiritual economy. They live in the spirit world nearer to the gods than man does, and it would seem that they are to the Bechuana what the demons were to the ancient Greeks, or to the Jews in the time of Our Lord. But not only are they hostile to the human race, or, at any rate, to the Bechuana section of it, but they are the undoers of the things of God, the perverters of His purposes in creation. It is the *badimo* who by their bewitching power cause madness among human beings and turn men away from God. Madness is said to be "being possessed" by the *badimo*. Demon possession is most firmly believed in by the Bechuana, and so afraid are they of interfering with one possessed that they can only be persuaded with great difficulty to lay hands upon the possessed.

But it is believed that the *badimo* not only undo what God has purposed, but they incite man to turn away from God and transgress against His Godhead, with the result that man becomes an innovator, an originator of customs that were never intended by God at the time when He called Lowè from his cave and gave to him the laws of life. Moreover, they incite men to become lawless or laws unto themselves. This change of custom, this innovation of laws, is looked upon as a despising of the sacred name for God (the name of God is, as we shall see later, an unmentionable name). In other words, these *badimo* are destroyers of the work of God, for they break down what He has raised and by denying Him make themselves His equals, by claiming or taking unto themselves His divinity.

There is a myth that their chief, Dimo, is man's great enemy, who eats people. He dwells in the uninhabited parts of the land, seeking whom he may devour, going about with a large bag, into which he puts his prey. He is notorious for his presumption and self-importance, and one of his songs is indicative of his claim to equality with the "Mighty One." Here is the song and its interpretation :

*Segwanyana sa ga Maloñwe*  
*Nka se chwara, ka se thuba.*  
*Maloñwe ga a kake a mpolaea,*  
*A o ka bolaea madi a gagwe?*  
*Badimo re apaea tsie ka pitsana tsa rona,*  
*Ke tse di khwibidu le mo nokeñ di khwibidu.*



A VETERAN OF THE BAKWENA TRIBE.

He wears a cloak of wild-cat tails. This is his uniform. He carries a spear and a battle-axe of native workmanship.



*Interpretation :*

Little calabash of Malongwe  
I can take it, I can break it.  
Malongwe cannot kill me,  
Can he kill his own blood?  
*Badimo*, we cook locusts in our little pots,  
They are red, even in the river they are red.

Moreover, it is said that this *Dimo* is not only a powerful liar, but even prides himself upon that power, asserting that the mother of God pounded the leaves and seed pods of the mimosa tree and made medicine, and after she had woven the tongue she anointed it with the medicine and gave it the power of twisting like a snake. So he overcame by the power of the tongue, i.e. the ability to lie.

Now this *Dimodimo*, head of the family of the *badimo*, and classed as a demi-god, is greatly feared. He is looked upon, and spoken of, as a rebel to God ; one who goes about undoing God's work, insulting His deity and misrepresenting Him. He is also the arch enemy of man, and is especially malignant to little children. From babyhood children are taught to fear him, and are guarded by charms and incantations against him and his host (the *badimo*). If a child is given to babbling to itself, or goes off into fits of laughter, or shows uncommon fear of people, or gives any indication of mental derangement, then it is thought that these are unmistakable signs of attempted possession of the child by the *badimo*.

Now through fear many Bechuana offer to the

*badimo* the homage which is due to divine beings, and so, what one may term demon-worship is not uncommon; and it is in such cases as these that the initiated witch doctor comes in and by means of charms, incantations and sacrifices, wards off the evil thing. In cases where the Bechuana think that the demon has his abode already in the human, the witch doctor is again called in, not to ward off, but to exorcise the spirit. Exorcism, or the practice of it, is by no means uncommon among the Bechuana.

But the Bechuana idea of these demons is a very mixed one. They affirm that they live near to God and know more of Him and His ways and attributes than man does. What they do, therefore, is wilfully done and not through ignorance. It is they who are the inciters of all rebellious thoughts and deeds. They are the inspirers of laws and customs which are new. While attributing to them the perversion of God's purposes and the undoing of His will, yet they speak of them as "God's people." If a Mochuana has a terrifying dream of his deceased ancestors he will say, "The *badimo* have made themselves visible." This is in spite of the fact that it is a very unusual way of speaking of their dead, for, as I have already said, they never class their own relatives as being among the *badimo*, but speak of them as "those who have passed on," or, "they who have left us." As one listens to such expressions as these coming from one bereaved, how familiar they sound, and how near our own expressions, thus showing us that death calls



from us all similar expressions with which to clothe our loss and our hope.

No greater insult can be offered to the Bechuana than to connect them in any way with the *badimo*. It is only when correction is being given or sharp reproof for conduct unbecomingly reverent to the dead that expressions may be used indicating that there is communion of the corrected and reprov'd with these demons, and even then, so I am told, it is done with the hope that the reprov'd will be drawn away from what is feared to be a leaning towards friendliness with these enemies of mankind. To connect a human being with *Modimo* (God) is a great honouring of him, but to suggest any connection with *badimo* is equivalent to saying that his humanness has become changed, that he no longer follows the usages of men, and that he has become the associate of the demons. Such a change is said to be the punishment which God metes out for murder, and for the cruel slaughter of living things in a proud and scornful manner, for He, God, is the avenger.

While the Bechuana do not admit that their own dead are among the *badimo*, yet they do affirm that those who during their earthly life practised witchcraft or were guilty of cannibalism are to be found among them. They are those whom God turned back from the pathway of the dead, were forbidden to mix with human, and so became earthbound, spirits. They wander about among the tombs, making

their abodes near to the dwelling-places of the dead bodies, in the caves of the hills, or even by the wayside along which travellers go. They mock the living who may approach their habitats, crying out: "This is our veld, you are troubling us. Your time is that of the day. What do you here in the dark hours of the night? Don't you know the night is ours, because we fear you?" And so these *badimo*, or *badimona* as they are sometimes called, these outcasts from the spirit and physical worlds, vent their spite on night travellers who rest by the wayside, assault them and destroy their possessions. This they are said to do because they hunger for restoration to human fellowships, and for earthly possessions.

Fear of the unknown has played a very great part in the creation of the *badimo* myths. The unexplainable noises of the night, the uncomprehended powers of nature, the dreaded effects of sickness, mental and physical, and the mystery of dreams, have all evidently shared in the formation of the Bechuana's lore of demonology. We can see the dread that gripped their spirits, and maybe understand how in the face of the great mysteries of life, they feared, propitiated and even worshipped.

## CHAPTER XIII

### Demi-Gods

**T**HERE can be no doubt that among the Bechuana the belief in a number of demi-gods is held by all who have not become Christians. These gods seem to stand in different orders and vary in power and position. They are all called gods (*medimo*), but I do not remember ever hearing one of them called by the singular of this word, viz. *modimo*, though if the question is asked as to what So-and-so (one of these gods) is, the answer given would be a *modimo*. But, as already mentioned, the word *modimo* is not used exclusively for these demons or spiritual beings, who play so great a part in the thoughts of the ordinary people. I have heard a native address a European from whom he was urgently seeking help as *modimo oa me* (my god). I have also heard of a *modimo*, whom a party of travellers carried about with them; and, when they camped hid him from view, and sought food, etc., from the people in the neighbourhood of their camp, telling them it was offerings for the god whom they had in their midst—a human god. This god was not an image, but a living human being.

There are places to be found to-day where it is said men of old used to hold converse with the gods who dwelt in the caves at the foot of the hills, and these places are pointed out as the abode of the *medimo*. Probably some of these gods are deified heroes, around whose names legends have grown, or may be powers of nature that have first been personified and afterwards deified. The dead in their collective capacity are spoken of also as *medimo*.

Among these demi-gods are to be found the gods of the initiation ceremonies of the youths of both sexes; and the dressed-up humans, whether male or female, are probably representative of the deity or demons whose connection with these ceremonies has been handed down the ages. In an earlier chapter on the ceremonies I have said that in all probability the ceremony as it is performed to-day is but a degraded descendant of what was once a purely religious ceremony, and it is not surprising that as the ceremony became less and less religious, and more and more licentious, the actual purpose of the demi-gods' appearance in the ceremony should become dim, even though the taboo connected with it should remain, and none but the ceremonially pure be allowed to take part therein.

But all the *medimo* cannot be said to be earth-born, man-made gods. Tintibane, "child of God and child of Earth," may be earth-born, as he is oft referred to as *Tintibane a lehatshe*, or *ñwana oa Mbatshe*, which means Tintibane of the earth or child of the earthly

one, and *Thobege a phachwa*, who is said to have only one leg, may be deifications of heroes of a very long gone by age, but there are others who seem to have no connection with the earth save through the lives of human beings. Tintibane is the god whose name is most common among the Bechuana. It is in his name they take their most solemn, and it is by the crown of his head they swear their most binding, oaths. His name makes an oath sacred. He, too, it is who was the conqueror of famine by domesticating the first wild goats, overcoming Mpete and robbing him of his possessions, in the interests of the children of men. Another of these *medimo* is Thanakana. All have to do with the initiation ceremonies, and their emblems are the *modimako* of the *Bogwera* (male ceremony) and *Tlhoñwatlhoñwe* of the *Boyale* (female ceremony).

There are two of the *medimo* who are undoubtedly emanations of a god who does exist for the Bechuana, and who may be said to be their Most High God. One is *Cosa*—the god of destinies, he who allots to man his life ; who stood at the beginning of human history and mapped out the course, together with the events that should befall men. It is this god *Cosa* from whose advent the Bechuana begin their count of time. He was before the days of Bilo or Bilwe (the first-born son of man) and just as we reckon our history as B.C or A.D. so do Bechuana reckon from or before *Cosa*, to signify prehistoric or historic times.

The other demi-god is NAPE. We gather from the dictionary that Nape is one of the gods of the female initiation ceremony; but Nape is much more than that. He may have his place in that ceremony, but he is constantly being brought to their notice in the various acts of divination. It is he who has given his name to soothsaying, to necromancy and to the arts of divination. A soothsayer or diviner is called a *moitse-a-nape*, or one who knows Nape, and the act of divining or soothsaying is *boitse yoa nape*, or knowledge of Nape. But what is this save the bringing into light of the hidden things, the unfolding of mysteries, the bringing forth of knowledge? Nape, then, is the manifestation of the mind of God, or of the gods.

## CHAPTER XIV

### The Supreme Being

**B**UT behind all supernatural beings, the demons and demi-gods, there is one who, while bearing the same name (*modimo*) as those already mentioned, is counted different from them; a being not only greater in power and wisdom, but whose very character seems to be conceived as something of a different nature. He is sometimes spoken of as the Supreme God, the god of gods (*Modimo oa medimo*), the god of very god. Sometimes he is spoken of as *modimo oa magodimo* (the god of the heavens) and at other times *Modimo oa go dimèlèla* (the invisible god, or the god who is in the far distance). To the ordinary Mochuana the word *modimo* refers to those already mentioned, such as Tintibane and Thobege a phacwa, the earth-born gods; or to Cosa and Nape, the spirit-born; but there is also a being whose presence pervades the universe, whose handiwork is everywhere manifest, who is the great unknown and invisible, but, nevertheless, real. The God whose name is too holy to be used in everyday speech, or by every child of the race, and to whom no personal name at all is given.

This word *modimo* for god is not a word introduced by the missionaries, but in the early days was the word given to them by the natives as the right and only word which is an equivalent for the word used by them. In early days the missionary spoke to the natives in the Dutch language, which was translated into the native tongue by Bechuana, who understood Dutch, or by other natives who understood both languages, and these Bechuana interpreters, after hearing the missionaries concerning God, said that their name for Him was MODIMO. But, while the name of God was known, it was found that very little else was known of Him apart from the name. As the thoughtful Bechuana will tell you, there is no one to-day who can trace the origin of the Bechuana idea of God. There is no service rendered to Him as the Supreme Being, but while they do not know Him, they have never quite forgotten His name, but He is generally ignored and well-nigh forgotten in their eagerness to propitiate the demi-gods and demons, by whose evil influences they regard themselves as being surrounded.

But even the use of the name *Modimo* for the great and mighty spirit whose presence fills the universe is very rarely used. In fact, from their earliest years children are taught that the word *modimo*, in so far as it refers to the Creator, is a great taboo, the mere mention of which in the ears of the people would cause death to the profane one. Even to-day this is so among some of the tribes. The name of God



(*Modimo*) as a personal name could only be warranted in very exceptional circumstances. In fact, the effect of this taboo, which has been so long in operation, has resulted in the loss of any desire to consider him, and has almost amounted to a prohibition to do so by the general body of the tribe. If the name *Modimo* is mentioned in ordinary conversation when reference is made to this being, the people will gaze at the profaner of the name, struck dumb with dread, expecting speedy death as the punishment for such profanity. But this taboo does not apply to chiefs, doctors of different kinds, mourners or those on whom sorrow has fallen, or who are lost. To such the use of the name is permissible, as it is either their position that warrants them in its use, or their circumstances which excuse it. It is felt, however, that no others would ever dare to use the name unless they were beside themselves, being incited to it by the *badimo* who have entered into them and who have them in their possession.

But while it is not permissible to pronounce the name *Modimo*, there are ways in which He may be invoked. This is by acts, such as looking upward ; by wetting the forefinger of the right hand with spittle, drawing it between the forefinger and thumb of the left hand, and pointing with it to the clouds ; by laying hold of the breast ; by grasping the big toe and wetting it with spittle ; by striking the thigh and by throwing dust, or a piece of reed or wood towards the sky. Any one of these acts is considered

as an invoking of the name of God. I think it is the act of wetting the forefinger of the right hand with spittle and pointing with it to the sky that is the most common, and the writer has seen it done very frequently. This forefinger seems to be a very important actor in taboo. It is the finger with which they point, and it is that on which the number seven is counted, for the ordinary way of counting by the Bechuana is to begin with the little finger of the left hand and cross over to the thumb of the right hand; though there are some to-day who begin their counting with the opposite hand. To point this finger at a person is equivalent to a curse. But even to use the term for "seven" is considered an ill-omen. Both act and number is expressed in the word *shupa*. The use of this finger is considered an ill-omen and a thing especially to be avoided. In this connection it may be interesting to know that the number seven was a great taboo among the Bechuana of long ago, and still is to all who cling to their old customs. It is, in a sense, a sacred number, and the Christian Sunday is in point of reckoning the seventh rather than the first day of the week. Notwithstanding the English and other European almanacs, Monday is counted as the first day of the week, and so on. Some Bechuana maintain that to their forefathers the seventh day, like the day of the new moon, was a sacred day and one to be kept free from work, such as the tilling of the soil. But whether a sacred number or not, it is considered as a number not to be treated

lightly in any circumstance of life. A native will avoid mentioning it if he can. Seven people will never set out on a journey or expedition together; either an eighth must be found or one of the number will fall out. And when cattle are being given for a wife, if the bridegroom-elect has only seven cattle he would never dream of offering them nor would the relatives of the wife think of accepting them, not only because they are an odd number, and odd numbers of cattle are not given, but also because of the particular number; so that an eighth thing of however trivial a value would be added, for, of course, the accepting of six would be to undervalue the bride-elect.

But the Bechuana all say that *Modimo* has always been known to them. Many say that he was better known to their forefathers than he is to them, but none, even to them, ever knew where he was or what he really was. They looked upon the elements, such as wind, hail and heat, as instruments of his displeasure sent as punishments by him, but other elements they regarded as instruments of his kindness. They never deified them, but always looked on them as instruments in his hands. Punishments came from him because of the introduction among men of new customs, or the turning aside from the old. The power of the elements was noted, and it was seen that some were potent for death, hence the fear with which they were regarded. This fear might lead some even to worship the elements, but none regarded

them as being god, but only instruments of his will and power.

To the older Bechuana the only Creator, Originator and Cause of all things is *Modimo*. They never attribute creation in any form to the *medimo*, or demi-gods. They tell you that there is only one Originator, not many. He alone is Creator, Maker and Founder, and the names *Montshi*, *Modihi*, *Mothei* and *Motlhodi*, are names applied to him in his attributes of Giver, Maker, Founder and Creator. By these names he may be spoken of ; and it is this being they mean to invoke when they perform one or other of the acts referred to above. We have already seen that the various forces of Nature, the powers of certain created things, and the dread of others, may lead the Bechuana to offer worship and seek to placate them, but these forces or creatures are never put in the place of God (*Modimo*) nor given the status of Him who formed man.

Some Bechuana affirm that in former days *Modimo* was visible to man, and that man had communion with him. Moreover, those who had this communion knew that they could see his visible form. The Bechuana give names to such humans, but it is never the name of *Modimo*. These claimants to divine communion may even give themselves names, but they never claim divinity. In recent years many such men have arisen and claimed to be prophets or messengers of *Modimo*, knowing the belief of the Bechuana that the Most High God makes messengers

of men. One such claimed to be John the Baptist, and another Jesus, returned to life. In one case they ordered the sacrifice on a certain day of every living white thing, and the destruction of everything that was not of native construction, asserting that such was the command of *Modimo*. Some years ago the present writer was brought into very close and intimate association with one of the best types of natives—one who had separated from the faith of his fathers and accepted Christianity, but who had not discarded the ancient belief that *Modimo* walked among and spoke to the children of men. He assured me, and he was fully convinced of the truth of his words, that he had met the Lord Jesus Christ in the veld, and that the Lord had spoken to him and given him a most important message to me and my fellow-missionaries. He even went so far as to give the very words and to describe the personal appearance of our Lord. He was most deeply distressed when he found we were not ready to accept his tale, and went away sorrowful. No words of mine could shake his belief that he had seen the Lord, not as a spirit, but in the flesh.

It has been said above that the name of *Modimo* may not be mentioned, as it is a great taboo, but it is always permissible and correct to speak of him by the pronouns which stand for *Modimo*, viz. *O*, *Oa* and *Òna*, and in many of their personal names we see this. Children are often given names in which the particle for *Modimo* is used. Here are a few such

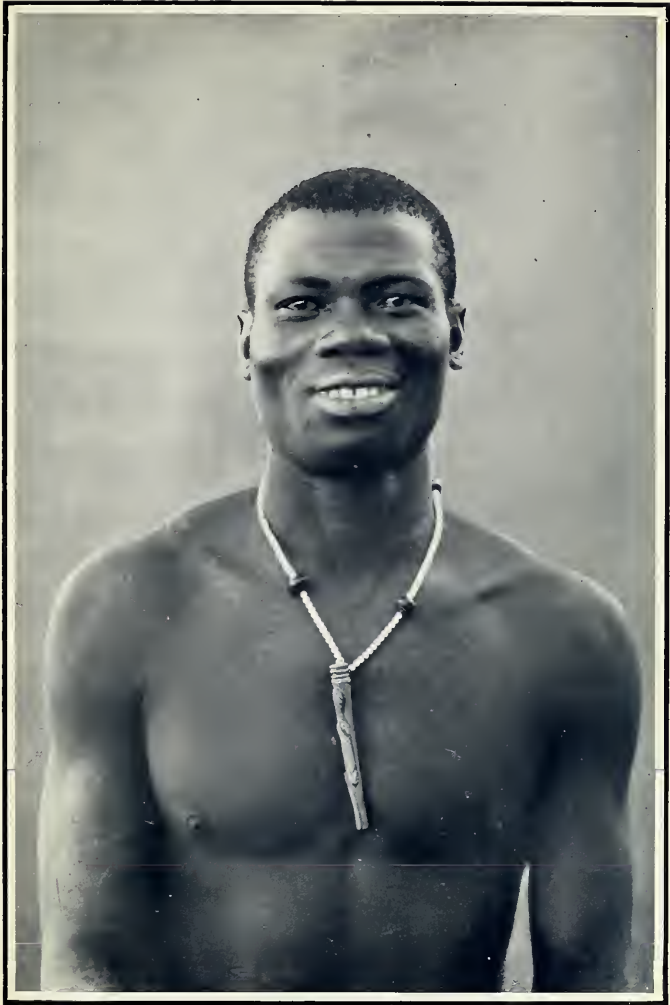
names: Go itse òna (he, i.e. *Modimo*, knows); Thataeaòna (his power); Ompiditse (he has called me); O abile (he has given); Go dira òna (he, himself, acts); Keolebile (I have looked on him) and many others.

There are, however, several names all belonging to the female sex in which the name and not the particle is used, e.g. Secwamodimoñ (it comes from God); Samodimo (belonging to, or pertaining to, God) and Sewagodimo (it comes from above).

Whether the taboo was due to the purely animistic fear that as the name of a thing possesses its personality and to name was to create and this fear led to the prohibition of the name of *modimo* lest *Modimo* himself should be called up, or whether it was that the name was considered too high for ordinary human lips, we have no means of knowing.

When the doctor-priests sing the praises of *Modimo*, they do so in the following hymn among others: *Thòberòbe e sena loco, ga e na pele le moragò* ("Thòberòbe without ancestry, having no future nor any past").

But the tabooing of the name of *Modimo* can scarcely be caused by fear, which would undoubtedly be the case if the taboo were of a purely animistic nature, for they fear the demi-gods, and yet their names are not taboo. *Modimo* is much revered by the Bechuana, whenever and wherever he is thought of at all. He is looked up to as the giver of all good things, and to say that *Modimo* is among them and that their possessions are his, is counted a great



A YOUNG MAN OF THE BAROLONG TRIBE.





blessing, and they rejoice in the thought that it is he who is their adviser. A not uncommon saying regarding one who is in difficulty and whom it is intended to encourage, is *O eme le modimo* (He is standing with God), and a well-known and oft-quoted proverb is, *Ntlha ea kgosi e iwa ke modimo*, which may be translated, God is on the side of the chief, or perhaps even, God is on the side of the strong ones. A willing, helpful person is called a "child of God" (*ñwana oa modimo*), while it is always said that *Modimo* is the God of the orphans. One sometimes hears a friend speeding another on his way with these words, *A modimo o gu ètèlèlè pele, o bo o gu salè moragò* (God go ahead of you and also be your rearguard).

Among the Bechuana, God (*Modimo*) is never looked for in material things, nor even in the *badimo*, but only in man. Hence man may become his representative, especially when he is instrumental in delivering from danger or adversity. As such, i.e. as the representative of *Modimo*, man may even be bowed down to and have his praises sung as to a god. Chiefs have often such honour paid to them by their subjects, and the priest-doctors are also honoured in this way by chiefs. That the Bechuana believe that *Modimo* himself is present with man may be gathered from a farewell greeting to a traveller which is as follows: "*U tsamaeè sentlè. Tsela ea gago e heèlwè, Modimo o tsamaeè nau, u ilogèlwè ke ditiba pele*" (Go nicely. May your path be swept [of dangers]. God go with you and may you be left [escape from]

the mishaps ahead). *Modimo* is not only the maker of man, but the inspirer of his understanding. He has made him so that knowledge and power and understanding may be in him. They say, God has not only given man understanding of power, but has given him a power only inferior to his own, so that man is given the power of originating, but not like that of *Modimo*. The highest class of native doctor, as distinguished from the mere charlatan, acknowledges that all his powers of divination, of exorcism and of healing, come from *Modimo*. It is *Modimo* who gives a blessing to their work, and so their doctoring is helpful to mankind. The Bechuana see him in the gentle dealings and kind ways of those whose help and mercy and grace, extended to their fellows, is evidence of the presence of *Modimo* in their hearts. Not only is he present with man in conscious life, but is with him in sleep and even in death. Although natural death is said to be the "visitation" of *Modimo*, and when it cannot be accounted for by accident or witchcraft they will say "O *bolailwe ke Modimo*" (he has been killed by God), yet one often hears the expression *Modimo ga se mmolai* (God is not a murderer), which shows that he is not regarded as the slaughterer, especially by those who claim to know something of him as seen in the events of life.

Praise is offered to *Modimo* and there is one very old hymn which is addressed to him when the darkness of the night is disappearing before the coming day. This hymn may indicate that at one time in their

history their ancestors were worshippers of the sun, or, at any rate, mixed with such worshippers, and handed down to their posterity this hymn. It is said to be a very ancient hymn, known only to a very few ; and as there is no sun-worship among the Bechuana to-day nor any knowledge of there having been sun-worship among their ancestors, the hymn can only refer to some ancient custom which has died out among the people, though the hymn itself remains as a reminder of what once existed. Here is the hymn, or, at any rate, part of it: "*Modimo u tlè le mahube a bosa le letsatsi ye*" (O God, come with the roseate hues of the dawn and with this day).

Although there is no house of prayer among the Bechuana and no place to which the tribes gather together for worship, yet, as we have already seen, the Bechuana are not without forms of prayer. The invocatory acts of which mention has already been made, the act of prayer before a growing tree or before a shoot set up on a small mound by the suppliant give evidence of this. But the witch doctors themselves say that they pray, prayers of confession and of intercession. The rain-doctor offers prayer for rain, though his prayer may take the form of an act or series of acts rather than of words. A rain-doctor once reminded Dr. Livingstone of this fact, pointing out that his mode of approaching God might not be that of the Doctor's, but was an act of prayer just the same. But prayer is not confined to the doctors, who may be classed as the priests of the tribe, nor of

the chief, who may be considered the high priest of his particular tribe. There can be no doubt that the Bechuana pray, though they cannot be said to be men of prayer. Here are two prayers, both of which were offered by old women, neither of whom had ever been taught prayer by a missionary. One is contained in a story of which the substance is that in time of great famine an old woman went with her townspeople to the bush to gather the roots of a thorn tree, which they pounded and ate for food. When the people went to seek for water the old dame, on account of her age and infirmity, was left behind. They gave as their excuse for leaving her that she being old and decrepit would only be a hindrance to them. The old woman, left alone, went on with the preparation of her root-food, gathering the bush, bruising and pounding it. But while she worked she prayed, and this was the burden of her prayer, "*Modimo wè, mmè, u dibè gore diyò tse di nnè le àdna metse*" (Dear god, grant that this food may also be water). As she worked she prayed her prayer that moisture might be added to the plant. Her people troubled no more about her, but after some days had elapsed they came across her again, and to their surprise, she was well and active. To them she told her story that she had prayed, and that while she had no water she had never felt thirsty.

The descendant of a long line of priest-doctors once told the present writer that he had frequently seen his aged grandmother, the wife of an eminent

witch-doctor, with covered head, bowing to the ground, and heard her praying in these words: "*Modimo, mmè, ke bonè banyana ba me ba cohetse yaka nna, me ba sa gope ka mpa, ba shotlega*" (O God, grant that I may see my children grown old like me but not crawling on their stomach, objects of scorn).

It is said that there is a strange form of intercessory prayer in which no words are used, but the whole prayer is offered in an act. It is offered when a person is sick unto death and little hope of recovery is present. An animal, selected of course by the witch-doctor, will be slaughtered and the blood drawn off into a large bowl. This having been done, all the child relatives of the sick person are called together, and sitting round the bowl will lap up the blood. This is the prayer, no words uttered, but simply the act.

## CHAPTER XV

### Priestcraft

**O**F religious ceremonies the Bechuana seem to have few. No temples exist, no graven images nor any recognized altars of sacrifice or offering, either patriarchal or tribal. But there are many ceremonies that are undoubtedly of a religious nature, and several that remind one of the Levitical Code, and there is also a priesthood represented to-day by the *dingaka* (*diñaka*) or witch-doctors, at the head of whom generally stands the chief. These priest-doctors not only practise the healing art, but are professors of witchcraft, of sorcery and of divination. They also are the rain-makers on whose prayers and arts the prosperity of a tribe depends. Among some of the smaller tribes this class is absent and they have to get their priest from some other tribe; but in other tribes there are many representatives of the fraternity. The status of these priest-doctors is not a common one, for there are several degrees of the profession. Sometimes, and in modern times very frequently, the doctor is just an ordinary quack, but that is not always the case, and at one time the profession must have been a very

close one. The writer knows of one family which for many generations has practised the combined arts of healing and priesthood. But where the occult and other knowledge has not been confined to a family and only passed on from father to son, admission to the profession is only obtained after a long apprenticeship, following the payment of a premium. The pupil has to go through a regular curriculum. His teacher takes him to the open country or to the mountain and shows him the herbs used in his arts. This tuition is called "teaching to dig." The knowledge shown by several of these doctors in the healing and other properties of herbs is by no means to be despised. But the doctor must also know how to throw the bones, for on the knowledge of what the bones say, according to the position in which they lie after the act of throwing them, depends the revelation to be made. In some cases the aspirant after honours in this profession will keep a vigil, and it is only after this and the termination of his apprenticeship that he can begin to practise on his own account, wear the mantle or head-dress made of baboon-skin, and sit on the hyena-skin mat. The recognized doctor is, however, also a public official. On him devolves the making of the charms which are to be the guardians of the town. It is he alone who, with the assistance of his disciples, may, out of their united wisdom, prepare and mix the various ingredients that compose the charms. This charming of the town is a yearly act, and any failure to purify

and charm the town would result in some calamity to the tribe. This custom is rarely, if ever, observed to-day, for like many other of the customs of the Bechuana, good as well as bad, it is dying out before the onward march of civilization. But John Mackenzie in his book "Ten Years North of the Orange River," tells us something of it as it was observed in his day among the Bamangwato. He says: "It is held to be the highest and most sacred and mysterious service performed in the town. One of the observances is to select an ox, which is caught, and its eyelids sewn together, when it is again allowed to join the troop. It is called the 'ox of the *dipheku* or charms.' It is eventually slaughtered as a religious rite by the priests. When the concoction of the charms is completed, part of the contents of the sacred vessels in which they have been prepared is emptied into small calabashes or gourds, more than a dozen of which hang from the person of the head sorcerer on public occasions, especially in time of war. During the attack by the Matebele, Sekhome (the chief of the tribe and therefore high priest) was always arrayed with these calabashes round his shoulders and waist, which gave him a most fantastic appearance. By means of them he was supposed to protect his own people, and to bring evil upon his enemies. Another portion of the *dipheku* is conveyed outside the town by the priests and placed on all the paths that lead to it."

Another of the duties of these priests is to "make



rain." The maker of rain is called by a special name (*moroka*), and while it is held that each chief should be able to make rain for his own people, yet it is the outside rain-maker who comes from a well-watered country that is generally the most popular. Sometimes a well-known rain-maker will be sent for and his fee is usually very high. Sometimes an itinerant rain-maker will visit a town and arrangements will be made with him for a plentiful supply of the needed moisture. The rain-maker is always supplied with a quantity of roots, bark and leaves, which he barter to the people for beads and other articles. The roots, etc., are of great potency, so say the doctors, to bring about the greatest prosperity to the gardens of the purchasers.

The wise rain-maker never prophesies the near approach of rain until he sees atmospheric indications of its nearness. There is a proverb which says, "*moroka o sita ka leru*" (the rain-maker overcomes through the cloud). But there are times when no amount of incantation, no offering of "prayer," no sacrifice of beast, large or small, brings the rain. The cause of delay is never, of course, in the inability of the maker to bring down the water from the clouds, which cover the sky from morn till late afternoon, only to disappear in the evening. It must lie somewhere else, and every effort must be put forth to overcome the powers that are keeping back the blessing from the land. At the time of the rainy season, and after the preliminary ceremonies have taken place,

the doctors may be seen on the heights surrounding a town, or on any height that may be near one, lighting their fires, blowing their horns, whistling and shouting. But if the rain still delays its coming then there is ceremonial uncleanness in the town. Maybe widowers and widows are resident there, and still ceremonially unclean after the death of their spouses. Outside the town then must all go who have not observed the ceremony of purification. This ceremony consists of having the heads shaved in a peculiar fashion, which does not produce complete baldness. Then they must be purified by the priests. So long as the rain holds off its delay may be laid at the door of carelessness in observing this custom, but if there is no known case of ceremonial impurity among the people, it may be the fire-places that are unclean, and these must be cleared away and new fire kindled. The native fire-place is a very primitive one, consisting merely of three stones, on which is placed the cooking-pot. These stones must be collected by the priest, and are cast into a heap outside the town. Then all fires are extinguished, as the fires themselves are declared to be impure. Only the priests can kindle fresh fires, and this they proceed to do by carrying round lighted sticks which have been previously charmed. Having seen that the old fire-place is completely cleared of all ash, etc., a new fire is kindled on the hearth from the lighted stick of the doctor-priest. But still the rain may delay, and it may be that the whole town and not only its

people and fire-hearths are the cause, through its impurity. Then comes the order that all defilement be removed from the town and its environment. Exposed human bones must be buried, and other impurities removed, but all under the direction of the chief sorcerer. Should this purifying process not bring about the desired rainfall then sacrifice must be made at the grave of some distinguished and still revered or much feared ancestor. The sacrifice may be that of a sheep or a goat, or even some more expensive sacrifice. Its object is to appease the spirit of the deceased and beg his influence that rain may come. Prayer is also offered at the grave, in which he is invoked to look upon the distress of his children, and to help them in any way he can. But there are times when no purification of person or place, nor yet any ordinary sacrifice avails, for the rain comes not. Then are the rain-makers at their wits' end, and they will suggest that some animal most difficult to catch and kill shall be hunted for in the veld, as it alone, offered in sacrifice, will prove acceptable to whomsoever is holding back the rain. If this animal cannot be found, then, of course, the failure is not that of the professed maker of rain, but must be laid at the door of the people themselves. There have been times when every known plan has been put into operation and yet no success has followed the rain-maker's art. When such is the case the doctor escapes in the night, as he knows the anger of the people will be great against him. But sometimes he does not

escape, and the writer has been told that there are cases known to many in which he is placed in the sun with no shade over his head until such time as the rain falls. Rain may often be very slow in coming, but no season ever goes by without it making its appearance at last, and the wisest rain-makers are those who study the signs of the weather and make no promise of rain until they are pretty sure it is at hand.

It is customary, too, to charm the ploughed lands, and these charms are obtained from the doctors, who are supposed to be experts in the knowledge of how to ward off evils from the crop as well as to ensure a large one. Small quantities of seed-corn which have been blessed by the doctors are purchased by the people and planted at the corners of the plot they propose to cultivate. On the day in which the "blessed" seed is planted no further work will be done in the garden; but on the following day the prohibition is removed and cultivation may be proceeded with.

But the craft of the priest-doctor is not always that of a helpful kind, such as making rain, or purifying the persons and goods of the people, or mediating between them and their offended ancestors, and placating the latter by means of sacrifices offered according to their supernatural knowledge. It is oft-times used as a curse rather than a blessing, as harmful rather than helpful. The powers wielded by the priest-doctor may be used to bring about the

very opposite conditions to those mentioned above, but when that is so, then not only the name of the craft is changed, but the priest-doctor becomes a sorcerer of an evil kind, a *moloi* or wizard. The power to bring rain may be used to prevent its coming, the knowledge of the healing properties of some herbs may be coupled with that of the toxic properties of others, and the power to charm a man so that he will be safe from the malignity of his enemies in the town, and the spears of his foes in the battle, and the charge of the wild beast in the chase, may be used to give him over to the malignity of man and beast. There is nothing the Bechuana fear more than *boloi* (witchcraft), and to call a man a *moloi* is the most insulting term that can be applied to him, for it is equivalent to calling him a mean and sneaky murderer. The *moloi* is not the doctor who sits on the hyena skin, but he who rides the hyena at night. Not one who works in the open with his charms and incantations, but one who works in the dark, and by a misuse of his knowledge. We have seen how they make the rain, but the most common way of preventing it is to thrust the green branches of a bush chosen by them into the fire, and to repeat the various incantations suited to the occasion.

Just as the power of the priest-doctor may be obtained for a good purpose by the payment of a fee, so his power for an evil purpose may be secured in the same way. A man may want evil to fall upon his enemy, and he will pay the wizard to bring this evil

upon him. He may want him to be gored by the buffalo in the chase, or his death brought about in some way, and for this he will pay a fee. Sometimes when a man has received fatal injuries in the chase, such as from the charge of a buffalo, or the claws of a tiger, or the bite of a lion, or in some other equally fatal way, his friends will say he was "given over" to it. His death was brought about by his enemy, who has paid a wizard to cause the wild beast to make its charge. It is said that the doctors use parts of the bodies of men, which they obtain after death, and still-born children, in order to make their charms. The present writer cannot confirm this statement, but he does know that the bones of still-born children are dug up for the purpose of making rain, as such a case took place at no earlier date than 1920, and that in a part of the country in which Christianity had been preached for many years.

But the professional priest-doctor is not the only one who is supposed to have these supernatural powers. Many innocent people are charged with having bewitched their neighbours, and these priest-doctors are called in to discover these people when they are not known. This power makes them the dread of the community, and as the priest-doctor is usually in league with the powerful it is the weak who suffer from their supposed power to point out the *moloji* in their midst. They will be employed to get rid of a powerful rival, either by the chief, or by one

powerful subject against another. The priest-doctor, however, is always careful to see that the one he denounces is not either in himself, or through his friends, more powerful than his employer. The plural of this word *moloi*, viz. *baloi*, is frequently used to frighten children, and is used as equivalent to the English words "bogey man."

There are more ways than one of discovering the bewitcher when the priest-doctor, or sorcerer, is called in. Some do it by "smelling out," affirming that they have the power of discovering the cause of sickness and the causer by smelling. But the most common way is by the casting of the bones, of which more is said in the chapter on Sacrifice. When the culprit is found, or is accused of the crime, the punishment follows very speedily. As a rule the sun is not allowed to go down ere "justice" is carried out. This is not the place to speak of the various cruel ways in which the so-called justice is meted out to the poor victims, but it is safe to say that no one of them errs on the side of mildness. It is no uncommon thing for the accused to be cast from the hill-top to the rocks on the plain beneath. But the accused will often deny guilt and then it may be he will be offered, or his friends will claim for him, the trial by ordeal. The present writer only knows of two methods of ordeal, one of them being very painful. There is the ordeal of the boiling cauldron, into which the accused is ordered to thrust his arm. Should it be scalded, pronouncement of guilt is said to have

been given by the ordeal. Of course, scalding must always take place when the water is hot enough ; but if the person put to the ordeal escapes with a very slight scalding or with none at all, which, of course, can only take place through the connivance of the priest-doctor, then innocence is declared. It is only a very few years ago that a native friend of the writer submitted to this trial after being goaded to it by his enemies and urged to it by his friends. He was perfectly innocent of the charge laid against him, but his arm was severely scalded and he was pronounced guilty. But as this took place when the power of the witch-doctor was held in check by the British Government no further punishment followed. Another kind of trial, and one that is painless, is to tread under foot a calabash, or drinking vessel, on the mouth of which has been placed two crossed sticks, previously charmed by the doctor. Should the accused break the calabash when it is trodden upon with the foot, then guilt is evidenced, but should there be no breakage the accused is innocent.

The priest-doctor's services are further required in providing charms for the homes and persons of the people as well as for their towns and gardens. By means of medicines of a protective character against evils, and of a purifying nature where evil exists, they are called upon to undo the evil effects of an enemy's work, to counteract the malignity of the witchcraft of others, to set free the powers of manhood and womanhood that have been enslaved by possessing





A MATRON OF THE BAKWENA TRIBE.

On cold winter mornings in Bechuanaland a kaross such as she wears is a great comfort.



demons, to restore mental and moral character which may have been lost, to revive right feelings in one who shows signs of being dead to all that usually appeals to the heart, and to ensure to women the love and regard of their husbands. They are the custodians of good fortune and the protectors against evil fortune, and by their charms can assure the one and ward off the other. To them belongs the knowledge of the ways of life and of death, and they profess to be able to ensure the one and prevent the other.

As the Bechuana believe that no misfortune befalls one naturally, but is always the effect of malevolence on the part of the living or the dead, so they also strongly believe that good fortune can only be maintained by means of charms. Hence for every event in life, for the present and for the future, the skill of the priest-doctor is needed. It is his knowledge and medicines applied to the body that alone can influence the heart and the spirit. When a man's relatives notice that his whole nature is changed, that the light of the mind is darkened and character has deteriorated so that it may be said that the real manhood is dead, though the body still lives ; when they realize that to all intents and purposes the human is alienated from fellowship with his kith and kin, then they apply to him a name (*sebibi* or *sehibi*), which signifies that though the body lives and moves it is only a grave, a place where something has died or been killed. The essential manhood is dead. It

is no uncommon thing to hear a person spoken of as being dead when he stands before you visibly alive. When this takes place it always means that there is an overshadowing of the true relationships of life, and a deterioration of character, as when a child neglects or repudiates his duty to his parents, or a parent fails in his duty as such; or when a subject treats as of little account his allegiance to his chief. Such a person may be taken or may take himself to the priest-doctor that his "sickness" may be cured, the evil eliminated and the demon exorcised. The doctor will prescribe the medicines that are to be rubbed on the body and afterwards cleansed off, together with the excrescences of the skin, by which means the evils resident in the body, or which have been placed there by the evil influence under which the patient is suffering—evils which have closed up or overshadowed the pores of the heart and changed the natural bent of the human spirit and so produced the state of living death—may be eliminated. This medicine is different from that used in the purification ceremonies, though the purifying action is similar. It is a restorative or reviver and is considered to be the most potent of all medicinal charms known to the craft, for it delivers from the most dreaded of all deaths, the death of the heart. The greatest of all curses that can fall upon one is that which brings about the death of the heart. Anyone on whom such a curse falls is not far from the grave itself. So when the patient has been anointed and "washed" he is said

to have had the shadow lifted, to be quickened, and to have come to himself, and this restoration is a restoration to the birthright of heart and character. To the Bechuana this birthright of the heart, this "true manhood," manifests itself in standing out for the truth (according to native custom).

But it is equally necessary in human life to maintain the continuance of good fortune and true humanity. This can only be done by the application of suitable medicines used in the way the doctors advise, for the good fortune or happiness which is without its medicinal charm does not stay with one. As the Bechuana say, "*Lesegò ye le senañ more lea tloga*" (The blessing which is without a charm departs). The medicine used for the continuance of good fortune consists of fat or oil medicinally treated with herbs, and is rubbed on the body. When a woman wishes to retain the affections of her husband she will rub her hands and arms with this medicinal charm ointment and, after rubbing it off, will mix the rubbings into which part of herself will now have gone with his food, unknown to him. This is believed by many women to be a most potent love philtre, provided the medicines used are of the right sort and strength.

Another way of securing the goodwill and help of one, or to ensure a continuance of the goodwill, is by gnawing medicinal roots, then spitting them into the hand, and after placing the hands on face and head, scattering the gnawed particles behind

one. This act of spitting is sometimes required by the priest-doctor before he will "cast the bones" on behalf of a patient—the patient being required to spit upon the bones so as to secure their aid.

## CHAPTER XVI

### Religious Ceremonies

**A**S has already been mentioned the Bechuana seem to have very few religious ceremonies, but it would not be correct to say that they have none at all. It is true no temples exist, nor any graven images, though we have seen that charms abound ; and while there are no recognized altars of sacrifice or offering, yet the places at which sacrifices are offered are temporary sacred places. There is no distinctive word for "altar," but there is a word *sebesho* (a place of burning or hearth) which is used of the spot on which the rain-maker places his offerings for burning. But this *sebesho* may be erected or set apart anywhere it pleases the rain-maker to do so. It is not a fixed place to which the tribe may gather from year to year. In fact, apart from the grave of the chief, or of the honoured ancestor, there is no place to which the tribe, or family, may assemble for act of homage or of sacrifice.

The religious acts are of three kinds. There is prayer, of which mention has already been made ; there is praise ; and there is sacrifice. We have seen

what the first is and what it means to the people. The purpose of the second is veneration, while the last has evidently in view the renewal of fellowship with the god or ancestor who has been estranged by sacrilegious acts, and has shown his disapproval of conduct by inflicting sickness or loss on the erring one.

The words used to signify the second of the religious acts are very significant when one looks at them from an etymological point of view. In the section on Totems it has been said that the attitude towards the totem is not that of worship, strictly speaking, but of veneration or of awe. There are two words used in this connection. One is not very commonly used, and to-day there are many who do not know its use. It is the word "*ana*," and it is from this word that the equivalent for totem comes, viz. *seanò*. But the word most commonly used, and which is known to all, is the word "*bina*," which is the same word as that used for "to dance." May it not be that while the more common word "*bina*" is used because the religious act is really a dancing, the more ancient word is "*ana*"? Naturally the act would be called by the common people by the name familiar to them when the purely religious purpose of the act became corrupted.

But the dance of veneration is always accompanied by the utterance of praises. When the people utter praises to their chiefs they are said to "*bòka*," and when they sing the praises of their god, or the priest-



doctor utters his praises to his god, the same word is used. Although in modern times the word "*baka*" is used, this latter word does not have the same significance as the former. Its more direct meaning is to extol or applaud, but the word "*bòka*" carries with it more than applause, more than extolling, it means distinctly to sing the praises. Now there is another word derived from this word, and which in its derived form intensifies the meaning of the primitive form. This is the word "*bòkòlela*," and it signifies to shout or scream as a dying animal. It has been taken into the language as the word to describe the wail of the slaughtered and the loud cry of one undergoing castigation.

As John Mackenzie reminds us, many of the ceremonies bear a close relation to the Levitical code. Weapons of war have to be purified before the army goes out to battle; the warriors who have taken part in the fight must be cleansed before they re-enter the town; captives taken in war as well as the cattle and goods must also be purified. The defilement caused by touching a dead body or even of having approached one has to be washed away. The obligation to raise up seed to the name of a deceased elder brother or relative is still enforced. The fourfold reparation for theft is to this day insisted upon by many chiefs. The mode by which a public covenant or agreement is made is almost, if not quite, identical with that of the Levitical code. When a solemn covenant is made between two chiefs or two men

of position an animal is slaughtered as a sacrifice, and some of the contents of the stomach are laid hold of by both parties to the agreement, their hands meeting together and grasping each other while covered with the contents of the stomach of the sacrifice.

Other ceremonies there are, but here the writer will close with that which refers to Atonement. The idea of Atonement through sacrifice is well understood by the Bechuana, and there are evidences that in quite modern times this sacrifice has been made. The word that stands for Atonement strictly means the act of bringing together two who have been alienated; the restoration to a peaceful state of those who have been estranged. It means an act of Reconciliation. There is a word *letla* which means to be in friendly relation with, and there is a reciprocal form of that word, *letlana*, which means to be at peace with one another, or to be in a state of mutual love. It is from the causative form of this latter word that the word to atone comes, viz. "*letlanya*," which means to reconcile or make at peace. The word for Reconciliation, *Tetlano*, is derived from the word "*letlana*"; and it is the word which describes the act of assuaging the anger, of bringing back the happy relations of offended and offender, which is used for Atonement. It is the act of a third person, never of one who has any part in the estrangement—the act of the peacemaker, the reconciler of chief and subject, of parent and child, and of master and servant. The reconciler must never be of the same rank or social standing

of the person for whom atonement is being made ; but must be, in the case of reconciliation between subjects and their chief, a chieftain or a councillor, and in the case of a parent or elder, an old person or one of higher birth. In no case must he be of lower standing or even of equal, nor must the would-be peacemaker go empty-handed. Without sacrifice there can be no reconciliation ; without the shedding of blood no remission of fault, and no restoration to former position. This sacrifice or offering is to “break the anger” of the injured majesty of kingship or elderhood. It is a peace-offering, and request for the forgiveness of the fault and remission of the penalty of alienation. But in these modern days the reconciler, while still a man of superior position, merely carries with him the prayer for remission and restoration to fellowship. A few years ago this ceremony of making atonement took place at a town well known to the writer. It was at the time of the rain-making, and the chief who was the chief of the ceremony had issued the command that if the first rain which fell was not a heavy soaking rain no one must go out to the gardens to plough, nor make any preparation for ploughing. The rain came, but only in small showers, and, notwithstanding the chief’s prohibition, some women took their hoes and went forth to plough. On this reaching the ears of the chief he waxed very wroth, and seizing his spear he went down to the wells and forbade the people to draw water for domestic purposes or for their cattle,

saying the people refused to obey him. The peaceful relations between chief and people were broken. Estrangement had taken place and the consequences might be serious. Upon seeing this, one of the leading men of the town, knowing what harmful results might follow such estrangement, taking a sheep in his hand, went down to the wells and begged the chief to accept the sheep as an atonement for the people's fault, and to forgive them by restoring to them the wells, and become reconciled to them. This gift, together with the prayer for restoration was effective, the chief became reconciled and he restored to them the wells, the old relationship was renewed—an atonement had been made.

It may be of interest at this stage to speak of two other words, both having a religious significance. These are the words which are used for the translation of "grace" and "forgiveness." Both words come from the same root, the verb *chwarà*, which means to lay hold of or to lay hands on. When the native people realized what was intended to be conveyed by "grace" they assured the enquirer that the only right word for it was *chwarò*; but *chwarò* is simply the noun derived from this verb and means "the being held." The word for forgiveness is *boichwarelò*, which is the noun derived from the reflexive form of the prepositional form of the verb, and means "the being laid hold of for oneself." To forgive is *ichwarela*, and, as the reader will see, means, "to hold for oneself." In both cases there is the idea

of "holding." Now when a native prays "*U nnè chwarò go nna*" (Be gracious unto me, or lay hold upon me) what is his idea but that his god will let nothing come between? And when he prays "*U ichwarele*" (Forgive me), he is literally saying "lay hold of me for yourself." To him forgiveness (*boichwarelò*) is the act of laying hold of the offender by the offended, not in punishment, but in graciousness. It carries with it not merely the remission of the fault, but all the consequences that have come from it. No native believes he has been forgiven if he is not restored to his original relationship. Forgiveness, then, is to him restoration, rehabilitation to his old position and a regranting of his former status. Oft and again has the present writer had this brought home to him when, notwithstanding his assurance that he had forgiven the fault of one of his people, the offender returned month after month still pleading for forgiveness, and when it was pointed out that forgiveness had been granted long ago, the reply always was, "but you have not restored me to my old position, our relations are not the same as they were before our estrangement." As we shall see when we come to the subject of sacrifices, this idea of restoration or renewal of the old relationship on exactly the same footing is the state sought for between the living and the dead.

## CHAPTER XVII

### The Sacrifice of Atonement

**T**HERE was once a priest-doctor who tried his skill against others of his guild and killed them. After a while he went to the river to dig up roots for medicine, as his custom had been. He found the plant he wanted and commenced to dig, but found that the root went deep down into the ground, much deeper far than ever he had known a root of that species of plant go before. He persevered, but notwithstanding all his efforts he could not reach the end of it. At last he cut it off and went home to his wife, to whom he told his strange experience. She asked him how he accounted for it and what it indicated, but he was unable to give any answer.

Next day he went to get the bark of a dry tree for medicinal purposes, but after making the usual cut across the bark he found the bark refused to be torn away from the trunk, however hard he pulled, and simply came off in bits. He tried again and again, but his experience was always the same, the bark would not come away in one great piece, from where he had cut it to the top of the tree; the top end of the bark always clung to the tree until eventually it

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reached even to the branches without coming away in a lump in his hands. Then he looked up to see if by any chance he had tried a green tree, but no, the bark was dry and brittle, and yet it refused to be torn away. So he left it and returned home. He was much perplexed and disturbed at this strange action of dead bark, and told his experience to his wife, who, in turn, asked what could be the meaning of it all. Then he told his wife of the trial of skill between him and his fellow-doctors, and how he had wilfully poisoned them and had not overcome them by occult knowledge. He said he believed it was *Modimo* (God) who was working against him and refusing to let him have the medicine.

Together they went to the town of their people, and before the chief and the tribe related the story of the trial of skill and the events that followed the killing. He told them that he was guilty of the death of men and must be put to death, otherwise the punishment due to him would fall on their heads. But the chief and people replied, "No, you are a god. Your fathers before you were gods, we cannot kill you." "Nay," said he, "I am no god, neither were the doctors I killed, nor my fathers, for had they been gods death could not have touched them. We are only men and the drugs we use are only medicines of use to them who are to be healed by their means, but of no power to those whose disease they cannot touch. I am no god, neither were my fathers gods, but there is a God who asks for my punishment."

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Then the chief spoke and suggested that cattle, sheep and goats be brought by the people and slaughtered as an offering on behalf of the murderer to propitiate God and take away the punishment. Thus men learnt that sacrifice would propitiate and make atonement.

### *Sacrifice.*

Inasmuch as the Bechuana believe themselves to be created by God they hold that the strength of life that is in man can only be taken away by Him. Death, except from extreme old age, is unnatural and must have its cause either in man's guilt and hence alienation from God, or in the ill will of the living or the dead operating through witchcraft and cursing. But, apart from certain acts of sacrilege, which demand the withdrawal of life, there is always a hope that the sickness may be removed and health restored by the help of the priest-doctor, who knows how to placate the grieved god or ancestor, and to counteract the witchcraft and render the curse impotent. The sick and those on whom the day of adversity has dawned may seek relief for themselves, but those who cannot, because of childhood or other inability, may have it sought for them, so that the adversity may be removed and prosperity, whether of body or goods, restored. This can only be done, however, by an offering or a sacrifice. The offering generally consists of corn, but some other thing may take its place. The sacrifice, as has already been stated, may be a sheep, a goat or an ox.



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But the sacrifice by itself is not considered sufficient. It must be accompanied by confession, and the confession usually, if not always, precedes the sacrifice. In the case of an adult, confession of faults against the dead, of dereliction of duties, of failure to live "according to custom," or some other probable cause of calling down the curse of the insulted one, must be made unto the priest-doctor, who has been called upon to find out the cause of the sickness and remove it, or to discover the reason for the sad condition that has befallen the stricken one, and have it changed. In the case of a child on whose behalf the doctor has been called in, confession of possible strife between the parents, or of their failure in any respect towards the recognized customs of their tribe, is required. But if it is a case of prolonged drought, or a murrain among the cattle of the tribe, or an epidemic of sickness that is carrying off the people in large numbers, then public confession on the part of the tribe must be made, confession of all their evil ways which may be hindering the coming of the rain or bringing about the death of cattle and people.

But very frequently confession comes very slowly, and sometimes it is not forthcoming at all, and then the witch-doctor, or priest-doctor, as he has been termed in these pages, has resource to the "bones." No doctor is without these aids to his divinations. They are his sacred tools with which he works, and he claims for them the power to reveal, to the initiated, things that are hidden from the ordinary

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human being. Some "bones" are heirlooms and are of priceless value to their owners. It is claimed for them that they act as the mouthpieces of the people who through fear of each other do not reveal all they know, or who are afraid publicly to confess all they feel and fear. The bones are the revealers of the hidden "sins," and so really become man's helpers, as, without full confession no propitiation is effectual, nor can the evil thing be removed from their midst. It is further said that the "bones" spare the parent the pain of having to reveal the insults of his child, and the chief the shame of having to charge his subjects with lack of respect, for the "bones" will tell all these things through the priest-doctor.

Now the Bechuana believe that the act of throwing the "bones" is of itself a testimony to faith in God, as they think their God speaks through the "bones," revealing to the people the evil things among them, and how they may be got rid of. They, further, through the revealing power, lead to confession of wrong, and teach that God will not tolerate such acts as they have been guilty of, or such new customs as have been introduced, or the neglect of the customs handed down to them from their ancestors. But the Bechuana of the present time, and doubtless it was the same of those of past generations, admit that the "bones" are often used for evil purpose, for the placing of guilt on the heads of innocent people, and for bringing to destruction those whom the priest-doctors, or those hired by them, want to ruin. They

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confess that much false accusation and civil strife are caused in this way; but when the people are gathered together as a tribe and it is a tribal and not a personal matter, then the "bones" reveal to the initiated interpreters, by the position they take up when they fall on the ground, the cause and remedy of the tribal distress. These "bones" are pieces of the hoofs of wild animals and some of them are ankle bones. Each bone has its own name, and each stands for some particular function. The three chief "bones" are called *Moremogolo* (Great Medicine), *Mmamotse* (Mother of the town) and *Seyaro* or *Seyarwe* (The conquered child). Great Medicine stands for the chief of the tribe, or the owner of the house and kraal; Mother of the town functions for the affairs of the household, while *Seyarwe* has to do with fugitives. The doctor who divines by these "bones" has learnt his trade, and gives his verdict according to the position taken up by the "bones" after he has thrown them. He has also learnt and memorized a rigmarole which he repeats from time to time as he busies himself about his profession. Some of his recitation is to praise goodness and despise evil, to testify to the value of friendship, and the enmity of evil to goodness. A few of his sayings are :

"*Popa-popa ea ipopaganyetsa.*"

"*Phatla-phatla ea iphatlbaletsba.*"

"*Tlhòtlhò-logolo o cosa diletseñ.*"

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“*Monteela-silò u mo khutlelesilo le meboè-mebe.*”

“*Shushu ilela Shushwane, gore Shushwane a gu ilele.*”

which may be interpreted to mean,

“The gatherer for himself doth gather.”

“The Scatterer divides to his own disadvantage.”

“The goer-back on his word rouses sleeping things  
(i.e. stirs up strife).”

“Striker of folly, cease from the foolish and the evil  
things returned to.”

“Shushu (Deafness) keep sacred Shushwane (Little  
Deafness) that Shushwane may keep thee sacred.”

But sometimes the “bones” are thrown by those who are seeking relief. The adult throws them for himself, the parent for the child, and the diviner or the chief for the town. It is required that this act, on every occasion that the help of the “bones” is sought, must be accompanied by self-examination and prayer, coupled with humble, but full, confession.

The offerings or sacrifices are of two kinds. There is the Wave-offering and the Burnt-offering. Both these offerings have to do with Purification, and both may sometimes be employed in one purifying ceremony; but, as a rule, houses, lands and kraals (cattle folds) are purified by a wave-offering, but the purification of persons cannot be made by any sacrifice that does not require the shedding of blood. When the priest-doctor waves the offering over the house, lands



A WARRIOR OF THE BAKWENA TRIBE.

He wears a *kaross*, or robe of dressed skins sewn together with fine sinews; and sandals on his feet to protect them from the hot sand. He carries a knob-kerrie, or club of wood, and a spear.



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or town, he accompanies the act with a song, in which he says, "*Pelo boèla bonnoñ. Mmatla selò o se bonye. Mogoge lere serokolwane sa metse a pula ea Magasa e kgolo. Modimo o re nesetse pula gore basimanyana ba iyele merògò le bothepe mo maropiñ.*" This invocation is used in time of drought, and says, "Heart return to the place. The seeker of the thing has found it. Drawer, bring the little bud of the water of the rain. God send us a great spreading rain that the little boys may eat for themselves the herbs and salad plants of the deserted homesteads."

The sacrifice of reconciliation requires two different coloured animals—a black to be sacrificed for the sin, and a white for the purification of the sinner. Whatever animal, ox, goat or sheep is offered, it is the contents of the stomach and the entrails of the slaughtered animal that are used for the purification—the flesh, being, of course, the perquisite of the priest-doctor. In the case of an individual the sacrifice is slain while the penitent is on bended knee, having previously made a full confession of all his fault. Then the priest-doctor takes the blood of the heart and the contents of the paunch, both of which have been taken out of the sacrifice before the animal is quite dead. The blood is drunk by the person on whose behalf the sacrifice is being made while it is still fresh, then on him is placed the fatty membranes of its bowels. When this is done, or while it is being done, the priest-doctor, or the chief, or the parents, if it is for a child, cries out that this is a sacrifice of

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reconciliation, and call upon the name of the supposed estranged ancestor or god. Then a rod (a hyssop rod) on which has been smeared some medicine is planted with its point upward, and the priest-doctor, gazing into the sky, takes this rod, strikes with it and then points with it to the clouds or sky. Then the name of God is uttered by the people taking part in the ceremony, when they gaze on the individual given over to sorrow, with the contents of the paunch spattered all over his body, and lips foul with the blood that has been drunk, and wearing the intestines of the sacrifice. The body is then most carefully rubbed and cleansed, and all the rubbings—the stomachic contents and the dirt that comes off with them—are gathered up, taken outside the town, and burnt. Then they fall on their knees in earnestness and pray, saying: “*Modimo, cwècwè, rea rapèla, ra re a ditlhòkwa di lale, a go tle letsididi*” (O God, be pleased to hear our prayer and let the shortcomings and failings lie down (i.e. be forgiven and forgotten) and let there be Coldness (restored relations). Then all the people cry out “Coldness,” “Coldness,” or “Rain.” It is in this way that breaches between the living and the dead are bridged; estrangements, that may even have taken place before the ancestor died, healed; forgiveness sought and reconciliation brought about. Sometimes the sick person will be required to make his penance at the grave of the alienated ancestor by confession there. Stories will be told by other members of the family and by neighbours



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of their efforts to heal the breach during the lifetime of the alienated one who is now supposed to be making his anger felt through the sickness of his descendant, and the priest-doctor will speak for the tribe and plead on behalf of the sick.

If the purification is that of a widow or widower who is seeking to marry again, and no marriage of either could be blessed until purification takes place, not only the persons but the house in which they are to live must be smeared with medicine and with the stomachic contents of the sacrifice. The persons seeking purification sit on a mat made of the skin of some black animal. Then they are smeared with the contents of the paunch, and this undigested food is then rubbed off the bodies of the persons being purified, mixed with herbs used as incense, and burnt ; and while the smoke of the rubbish is rising the following song is sung : “*Tlhatlhadiñwaneñ, tsaea mosi ke ouò u o ise koñ kwa ga Molelale, Molelale kgosi ea maru*” (Tlhatlhadiñwaneñ, take the smoke, there it is, take it right up to the place of Molelale, Molelale chief of the clouds). Then the mat is pointed at with the hyssop rod, and it is also burnt. The final burning is that of the rod itself. When the Christianized native reads Psalm, li. 7—“Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow”—how it must recall to him the ways of his fathers, who were cleansed of all their filthiness, both physical and ceremonial, with the hyssop rod, and with the rubbed-off contents of

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the sacrifice, which in the process of rubbing brought away with them the dirt of the body.

Spittle pays an important part in some of the sacrifices of the Bechuana, especially in those in which sickness is said to be caused, or feared to be caused, by ill-feeling on the part of the relatives of the sick person, or a feeling of injury in their hearts. When the sacrifice is slain the contents of the stomach will be taken and into them each relative called by the medicine man will expectorate, and the idea is that with the expectorated spittle whatever feelings of hurt or evil that may be in the heart will be expelled, and so the curse be removed from the sick person.

Two persons hitherto estranged may meet on the road, and to show that any resentment felt by them towards each other is ended, they will break a piece of twig or stalk of grass and each taking a piece of the broken thing will expectorate on it and then throw it over the shoulder behind them, thus indicating that all ill-feeling has been thrown from their heart and lies behind.

### *Sacred Days.*

The Bechuana have no sacred days such as are common among Christian peoples, or even among those who while not Christian yet have days and times that are set apart for special functions. But there are certain days that have to be observed as being different from other days of the month and year. And these days are made sacred by abstention

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from the ordinary avocations of the tribe. The first day of the new moon, the day on which it is said to be cursed by the baboon (*go rogwa ke chwene*) is a day of this description, but it is very difficult to see much difference, if any, that is made between this day and the other days of the month. It is only in the talk of the people that any notice is taken of this day, but it is more than probable that at one time in their history the new moon may have had special worship paid to it. Another day set apart from its fellows is the first day of the rainy season, not necessarily the first day of the season on which showers fall, but the day that in the estimation of the chief and the priest-doctor may be counted as the beginning of the ploughing season. On that day, apart from the planting of the "charmed" corn, already referred to, in the corners of the field, no more work may be done; but on the morrow the ban is lifted and cùltivation may be begun in earnest. The hours between early morning and late afternoon are also held sacred during the rainy season, so far as the cutting and carrying of green trees or even their branches are concerned. This is especially the case with regard to one special tree, the haak-doorn or hook-thorn (*Acacia detinens*). It would be a great offence to cut down a branch from this tree and carry it through the town at midday at any time during the rainy season. But as soon as the corn is ripe and the order for reaping has been given then the taboo is lifted, and on the day set apart for the ceremony the chief holds a public

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assembly, after which each man proceeds to the forest, cuts a branch of this sacred tree, brings it home on his shoulders and mends with it the cattle kraal belonging to the town. But, further, should rain fall in the night and be still falling when the people usually begin their morning's task of ploughing or digging, then that day and following days would be sacred days provided that rain continued to fall. So long as it rains that day must know no work.

Other days considered sacred may be sacred to one family but not to others, e.g. the day on which a child has been born, or a relative died, will be sacred to that family ; the day in which a grandchild is born to the first child of the family will also be set apart as a day of rest. The day on which a member of the household, male or female, enters the initiation ceremony which ushers into man- and woman-hood is also held as a day to be revered. But there is no act of worship connected with these days, and no ceremonies beyond that of abstention from work. They are not days that call for any special recognition of any of the deities to whom they owe allegiance or whom they fear ; there is no worship offered even to the one demi-god who has the credit of being the instrument through whom the fruits of the earth came. But the breach of observing any one of these days by cutting down a tree or even cutting bushes for hedge-building is likely to be punished. When the moon is at its full and the shadows are clearly seen, then the natives will tell you that it is a man

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they see, viz. *Rratlhaku* (the man with the bushes in his hand), who in defiance of the taboo, or in ignorance of it, went forth on the sacred day and cut down bushes, and because of this was banished to the moon. To-day many connect this day with the Christian Sunday and say that he cut them on a Sunday.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### Mythology & Folklore

#### I. CREATION STORIES.

**L**IKE every race the Bechuana have a legend or legends of the beginning of human life. The Bechuana have two or three versions, but each speaks of a cave from which the original man came forth. This cave is called Looè or Lowè, and the dweller therein was called by the same name, or, sometimes, *Lowè oa Cosè*, *Cosè* or *Cosa* being one of the demi-gods, he who presides over the destinies of mankind. *Lowè* was a man who also bore the name of *Tauetona*, which probably means "big lion." (It is rather significant that this name is given as a token of the highest honour to chiefs to-day.)

It was this *Lowè* whose footprints are said to be found with those of dogs in the conglomerate rocks in various parts of South Africa, principally at a place called Kopong. But as Kopong is south of the Zambezi it is evident that this cannot be the case. It is said he dwelt in the cave with his dogs and around him were the beasts of the field. When he came out of his cave he saw the animals and other created things, and many of the created things were brought

into being while he was there. Authority to name them was given to him, together with the command that he should distinguish each by a name. He gave a name to all with the exception of the snake.

The Bechuana have three stories of the creation of the human race, or, perhaps to be more exact, of the Bechuana. One story speaks of the creation of men and women, both youths in the prime of young manhood, and maidens, ripe for motherhood; but at first these lived in separate localities—the males living by themselves at a place called *Thaea-banna* (the originating of men), and the maidens by themselves in *Motlhaba-basetsana* (plain of the maidens). This legend also tells us that after the race had been created they were asked what they wished with regard to any who should die. What was to be their future? Should they return after death, or should there be a going away for good? The people were very very slow in giving an answer, so again and again the messengers came (the legend does not say from whom, but presumably from God). At last an answer was sent that the dead should return. This answer was sent by the chameleon, or the slow moving one, but it spent a very long time on the road. After its departure the people changed their mind, and sent a message to the gods by Kgatwane, the lizard, or the two-legged lizard, as some assert. He was to ask the gods to let women live and only men die, or, if that could not be, that all should die, saying: “Let death be a resting, and let there be no return of those

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who die." Now Kgatwane hurried with his message and arrived long before the chameleon. As this was the unanimous desire of mankind, God agreed, hence when man dies he does not return. At last, after many days, the chameleon also arrived at the abode of the gods and gave the message it had been given by man. In reply, God said, "I have already received the message from man, brought to me by the lizard, and I have agreed that man shall die and not return." So it is that death seems to end all and man returns not to the abode of men.

Another legend says that one day Lowè went out hunting with his dogs and suddenly he came upon the marks of human feet. He stood perplexed, gazing at the unknown prints, for they were neither the prints of the paws of dogs with which he was familiar, nor the marks of the hoofs of animals. So he returned home sorely perplexed, wondering what creatures they were who made such marks. He could not rest or sleep; he desired to see the creatures who made the marks, and when day dawned he rose and, leaving his dogs at home, set out on the search. But his search was in vain, for he returned to his cave without seeing anything. On the morrow he took his dogs and went hunting, and ere long he killed a deer; but when he began to eat it he found no pleasure in his food, it was no longer palatable to him. His yearning to see the two-footed creatures had taken away his appetite. He hung some of the meat of the deer in a tree, thinking that perhaps the creatures would be drawn



to the meat, while he went away sorrowful, but hoping that the desire for flesh would draw the creatures in his direction. In the meanwhile the women also saw footprints, and they, too, saw they were marks neither of paw nor hoof. They followed the spoor and eventually came to Lowè's cave and entered therein (but some say it was into a large mud shelter they entered and not into the cave). This cave was called the cave of Masilo, which is the name of a very early chief who ruled over the tribe which afterwards split up into four or more of the present Bechuana tribes. In the meantime the man continued his search most diligently, making enquiries of the beasts of the field, the giraffe, the elephant and the wolf among others, asking them if they had ever seen the Dikgolodikana, or Dipako, as he called these two-footed ones. He got no sympathy nor promise of help from the wolf, "who, at its best, was an evil-hearted thievish beast," but the elephant and the giraffe both promised to help him in the search, and if they found them to bring them to his cave. They found them after much search and brought them to his cave. Lowè and they had agreed that if they found them they would intimate to him their success. The intimation was to be given by a song which they were to sing as they drew near to the cave. Here is the song :

*Mmae-mmae, mouduudu heè !*

*Tlhoilha ea medupe*

*Ke tsile. U gae iiyè, heè !*

*Mogolokwane, ke tsile.*

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which may be interpreted to mean,

Here are the maternal ones, they who are weak.  
I have come and sought them amidst the peaceful rain.  
They are rejoicing. You who are at home, hurrah!  
Man of the house, I have come.

When Lowè heard the singing he knew that the Dikgolodikwane—the two-legged treaders on the ground—had appeared and were discovered, that they were the mothers of humanity, though weak. It was said that where they were it was good to be, and so he wanted them badly, and sorrowed till his countenance grew pale. But God also was sorry for him and gave them and him a command that they should associate with one another. Eventually the man followed their spoor, and coming upon them unawares while they were disporting themselves, he gazed on them longingly, and loved them.

A third legend merely says that men and women were created in large numbers and, marrying, became the progenitors of the human race.

The cave in which Lowè oa Cosè lived is said to be located in various places, but all within territory known to the present generation or that of the last century, and some affirm that it is in the Bakwena territory. But this story of a cave from which the earliest Mochuana issued, may it not be a relic of that far-off past when around the camp fires the children of a cave-dwelling generation told the story of their evolution from cave-dwellers to hut-builders,

and we see that while one legend speaks only of a cave, the other tells also of a mud structure into which the women went.

## II. FOLKLORE STORIES.

### *God sent death.*<sup>1</sup>

It is said that after man had been created he was given over to death, but after a time a council was held and it was decided that men should return after death. When this decision had been come to the tortoise was sent to say that after men had died they would be revived and return. The tortoise went on his errand, but while he was still on his way a second council was held, and it was then decided that after death there should be corruption only of the body. The lizard was sent to make known this second decision, and he arrived before the chameleon, who had been a long time on the road. The people agreed to this last decision, and the lizard returned and made known the agreement. Now, when the tortoise came with his tale the people said to their king, "No, chief, we believe in the message of the tortoise and we wish that men return after death." To this the chief replied, "Nay, but you have agreed; we have agreed and our words are those already agreed to, these later words are just sudden upspringings; go away, our first words stand." When the people heard

<sup>1</sup> This is evidently a variant of the tale told on page 163.

that the little tortoise had long ago been sent they all stared at it, and it drew in its head, made itself into a hump, dried up, drew in its legs, breathed hard and became just a shell.

*How Men Became Different in Colour.*

The following tale relates to the different colours among men, and gives the cause of this difference. It goes back to the very beginning of time.

When the human race was still in the cave of Lowè they were a very happy family until one suggested to the others that they should kill the well-beloved son of the chief. The people confessed to the chief that they had killed him, and that they had all agreed beforehand to put him to death. Then, as a punishment, the chief ordered them to come out of the place where they had enjoyed so much happiness. They came forth from the cave and were badly burnt by the sun, they were scorched and some of them became black, others were so badly burnt that they became deep black. Others again were cooked and became red, and others became so warmed up that they became brown, while some others had their skin so peeled that they became yellow. They had spread themselves over the land. (It will be noticed that there were none who became white. To-day all the colours mentioned above are to be found among the tribes of Africa, and examples of each type may be seen in one tribe.)

*The Story of Bile and Bilane.*

Once upon a time there was a man who had two sons, one named Bile or Bilwe and the other Bilane or Bilwane. The younger of these sons was the favourite of his parents, and because of that, jealousy filled the heart of the elder. One day the lads were together in the open country, and, because of the favouritism shown to the younger brother by the parents, Bile murdered him, hid his body in the ground, and went on his way, unobserved, as he supposed. The old people sought their lad, and with them on the search went Bile, weeping and making a great ado; but all their search was of no avail, as not a trace of him was to be found, and eventually they gave him up as gone for ever. Now one day when Bile was hunting he heard a little bird whistling a tune and chirruping, saying: "*Cwidi*, Bile killed Bilane and hid him in the ground." Bile stood wondering and said: "Oh, this bird is proclaiming aloud what it knows, and it will continue to make it known." He went home and slept, and on the morrow the bird came again, and once more it sang its song: "Bile killed Bilane and hid him in a hole in the ground." Bilane, thereupon, chased it and drove it away with stones. But the parents had heard the bird and knew what had taken place.

A variant of this story is as follows:

Once upon a time, long, long ago, one man killed another and hid his deed. The murdered man was

sought for everywhere but could not be found or even heard of, and so it was not known that Bilwe had killed his brother Bilwane. But when all was quiet Bilwe heard a bird singing and the burden of its song was "*Cwidi*, I will proclaim it, Bilwe has killed his brother." Bilwe stood in the midst of the people, listening and looking on every side; he looked at the people and afterwards sat down. This went on continually, whether he was asleep or awake. After awhile he accused one, saying it was he who was proclaiming this thing. He asked his mother about it, but she denied any knowledge. Then he fell sick, and when he was asked about his illness, he said: "I am not sick, but I am losing flesh through this accusation that is made against me." Then his father and mother began to take notice of his state, even when he was asleep. When he was eating he would stand and say, "Phoe"; when he went anywhere he sat dumb, defending himself and saying, "No, it is so; Yes, of course, chief." Then his father asked him, saying, "My child, tell me what it is that is causing you to pine away so? With whom is it you are speaking?" He said to his father, "Father, it is this accusation of having killed my brother that is with me day and night." Then the father asked who was his accuser; but to that he replied, "I don't know him, I don't see him, but he accuses me, and, moreover, he is very zealous in his charge against me." "Son," said the father, "did you kill Bilwane?" And he replied, "Yes, father." From this time

he was healed of his sickness, and even grew sleek again.

(Can it be that this story is a primitive idea of conscience, the little bird representing the inner voice that fear always hears? Is this just a version of the Cain and Abel story? It is of interest to know that Bile is the first-born child of man. It is from him that the Bechuana date time. Whenever they wish to denote the long, long ago they always speak of the long ago of Bile. Is Bile just the Sechuana rendering of Abel? It would be natural for the Bechuana to speak of the younger son as Bilane (little Bile), especially if the name Bile was the only one that came down to them. It is scarcely necessary to draw attention to the similarity of the name in the Bible story and that in this.)

*The Baboon was Once Human.*

It is said the baboon was a man, and, moreover, he was a learned rain-doctor. After permission had been given to the people to plough and to cut down trees, and after they were tired out with their hard work, he cut down trees, and when the time for ploughing came he spent it in the sun and did not ordain the rain to fall. When he was sent for to enquire into the fault, it is said he answered, "I alone am chief, and now I will cause it to come by myself. You, go and chop down the trees and plough." From that time forth they ceased to plough, saying, "We shall

plough no more nor chop down trees." Then a fire was made upon a large smooth flat stone and the stone became red hot, so much so, that the skin of the buttocks began to peel off and became bare. This took place while they were singing "Riticò ! Riticò ! I flee from ploughing and chopping." Then there grew a tail which gradually became spun out. This was followed by the body becoming bowed down, and the hands used as legs, so that the hill was trodden by both hands and feet, and both became as if they had no distinctive part to play. Loss of speech followed, and this in turn was followed by a low voice which could only say "Hoogò" and "Chepò" and "Ciiò."

*The Law of Unity.*

Once upon a time, long, long ago, a Mochuana, having grown old, called his children together and said to them, "My children, I am going away, remain nicely, live and work." Now, when he had so spoken, he took his staff and commanded them to bring their staves to him. When he had gathered all the staves together, he took one of them and gave it to one of his children, telling him to break it. He did so, and the staff was broken in two. After this he took the remaining staves and bound them together into a bundle, and gave it to them to break, but try as they might it remained unbroken.

"Now," said he, "what you see is the result of unity, my children. The staves were as one, and they



were too much for you because they were bound together. Did you notice what happened when I gave you one staff? You were able to break it, but when I gave you the staves as one they were beyond your strength to break. And, my children, let this be a law to you. Behold, if you separate from one another the enemy will break you one by one, but if you cleave together the enemy will find it too hard a task to conquer you, just as you have seen with the staves. Hold fast to each other that you may defeat the enemy. Do not separate lest the enemy break you."

*The Child Who Does Not Cry Dies in the Skin in which it is Carried.*

Once upon a time a certain man became the father of his first-born child, and he sought the help of a witch-doctor who would prevent it from ever crying. The mother of the child did not agree to the father's wish; but the latter said: "Nay, witches, enemies, beasts of prey, robbers and all things which hunt us, will hear us through the child. It will be so much the better if the child cry not, because while we are tabooed through childbirth we cannot climb a tree."

At last the mother agreed, saying, "As for me, I was saying that this child will not bear any surname, and the child who is not praised must not become angry, and so on account of the taboo, and enemies, and robbers, and witches, let the child not cry, but

simply sleep." Then God was sent to with the request that the child should not cry; that it should be carried in the skin on the back of the mother, and laid to sleep in the skin. And this was agreed to.

Time went on and the child lay in the skin without making a sound. It eventually fell ill, but gave no cry, and, moreover, it died there in the skin on its mother's back, and dried up. When after a time its mother remembered the child, she took it out of the skin and found it had gone the way of death, and she said in her sorrow, "Oh, look! here is the child who never cried, it has died in the skin."

The doctor was executed by the chief, but God afterwards consented to their mourning.

### *The Lost Child.*

It is said that some children once went to draw water, and they told one of their number to go and gather rushes for their vessels so that the water might not be spilled. While she was gone they laid a trap for her by hiding their necklaces in the ground. When she returned they told her they had cast their necklaces into the pool of the river, and she at once cast in hers also. They thereupon took their necklaces out of the ground, saying, "Did you think that we would cast away the necklaces given to us by our elders?" The child wept, and went along the banks of the river until she arrived where the water entered into a

cavity of the earth, saying as she went, "O pool, have you not seen my necklace?" The pool answered, "It is in the water, there." Then she entered and went on her way. While she was still going she saw some paths, and a little on ahead she saw children, and they took her to their home in a large town. She was asked about her mother, and afterwards taken to the chief. She was married to the chief's son and became a great woman in the tribe.

When her first-born child came she was sent to her own people, accompanied by an elephant and a hyena. The elephant carried the child and the hyena was given charge of the skin rug on which the child used to sleep, but while they were journeying the hyena ate the skin and turned back in the way. From that time the hyena has been abhorred by the people and it has been their enemy. But the elephant took the child and brought it in safety to the place whither it was sent, and as it reached its journey's end it sang "*Mmae, Mmae, Moudu we! Ilhòilba ea medupe! Ke tsile Mogolokane, ke tsile!*" The elephant was much honoured by the chief and the tribe and by all the other beasts; moreover, it was given great strength by the king of things, and was allowed to grow big. The king took an oath, saying: "Truly, elephant, you shall never ail anything or be overpowered by anything. You are in very deed the greatest of things."

*The Baboon, the Snake and the Hare.*

Once in the long long ago time when the animals used to talk, a baboon set out one morning to seek his breakfast. He went along the side of a hill turning over stones looking for scorpions, beetles and worms on which to break his fast. As he was walking along he came across a python lying fast under a big flat stone, unable to extricate itself. The python begged the baboon to set it free, saying, "Child of my father, take away this stone that I may come out. Do help me." The baboon lifted the stone and turned it over and the python was free. When it was free of the stone the python stood up straight and made to leap upon the baboon and curl itself around him in order to eat him. The baboon pleaded hard with the python to leave him alone, but it would not listen to his prayer. While they were still struggling the hare happened to come along that way and the baboon called it that it might act as judge between him and the python. The baboon told his tale and the python also told its tale; but the hare replied: "I don't quite understand, tell me again." The stories were told once more and again the hare said: "I do not understand, let the python return to the cleft where it was when the baboon found it, and let the stone be once more placed on its body, that I may see nicely for myself." It was done as the hare directed. Now, when the python was once again in captivity under the stone, the hare said to the baboon: "Run

away!" The baboon ran, and he and the hare left the python held down by the large stone as it was at first.

*Kaffir-corn the First Medicine.*

It is said that the first medicine known to man was Kaffir-corn, and it was eaten only at stated times by the demi-gods and the old men among the priest-doctors. It was not the constant food even of them, and not at all of the ordinary people, for to eat it was a great taboo. Once upon a time a great gathering of the people took place and corn was ground and cooked, and in some cases it was cooked unground. At this gathering the children with their elders were placed to one side, and some of the cooking-pots were taken there. While preparations were still being made for gathering the medicinal charms, and for the purification of those about to partake of the food, the children drew near to the dishes in play, took out little bits of the so-called medicines—the porridge, the corn cooked whole, and the other preparations of cooked grain. When they found it was nice they ate it all up. When one dared to go on eating he shook off some of the food from his fingers and then licked them, and finding it to his taste he continued eating. Great consternation fell upon the people; they wept, thinking that the children would die, or become sick, or vomit, or that the demi-gods would do something to them. The weeping spread over the whole land, for the people had gathered from every part of it.

The priest-doctors wanted the children to be put to death because they had originated a new custom contrary to the old ways—a custom that was very wicked indeed. But the chiefs objected, saying, “Let them be killed by God alone, for they are many and we are afraid to shed so much blood.” But as for the children they flourished and went on with their games as of yore, only they objected to eat their accustomed food and craved for the new, saying to their mothers, “Do give us of the food of the cooking pots.” They cried for the new kind of food and demanded it. Then the chief turned to the priest-doctors and said, “Now, doctors, what do you say about it?” The doctors replied, “The children are as demi-gods, they come from God, give it to them that they may eat.” And from that time they were given to eat of the contents of the pots of corn. But among the elders Kaffir-corn was still a medicine, eaten only by a sick person under the direction of the priest-doctor. In time it came to be the food of all the people, and medicinal treatment was made by means of the trees alone.

*Salamone the Orphan.*

Once there was a boy whose father was dead and he mourned for him day by day until at last his mother went to the chief and asked that the boy be put to death. To this request the chief agreed, and sent out the boy with a hunting party that he might

be put to death while hunting. But the servant of his father told Salamone, for that was the name of the lad, what had been decided with regard to him, and warned him to be wary as it was intended to kill him during the hunt. It came to pass that the hunters were spread in such a manner that it seemed impossible for Salamone to escape, but he managed to evade them and ran to the chief, but as no man had laid hands on him he could not substantiate his complaint. He then ran away, and in his flight he met an ant, who asked him whither he was going. He told the ant the circumstances, saying he did not know where to go. Thereupon the ant pulled out one of its antennæ and gave it to him, saying, "If you come to any difficult place think of me."

The lad went on his way and by and by he met a dove, which asked where he was going, and his reply was, "I don't know." The dove presented him with a feather from its wing, saying, like the ant, "If you meet with any difficulty, think of me." He proceeded on his journey and at last came across a house without any door or opening save at the pinnacle of the roof, and he did not know what to do. However, he remembered the words of the ant, and taking its little antenna he put it into his hair, whereupon he became changed into an ant and so was able to enter into the house by the little cracks through which the ants went in. He found a woman inside who was surprised to see him, and who asked him the same question as the ant and the dove. He also found

inside the house a large flower, and asked what it was. The woman replied, "I live here with Dimo (the child-eater, or ogre), and this flower is his strength, and if you can sever it you will have conquered him."

By and by Dimo came home, and Salamone changed himself into an ant once more. But on Dimo entering the house, he said, "Whence comes the scent of a human being?" But the woman denied that anyone had entered the house. Then the ogre slept, and when he was asleep Salamone broke off the flower and immediately Dimo awoke. Now Dimo was an ogre with ten heads, and as soon as they began to fight Salamone cut off one of his heads, but Dimo only said, "There still remain nine heads, he will not cut off another." Then Salamone cut off a second head, but Dimo said, "You will not cut off any of the remaining heads." Thus it went on until the heads were all cut off, and with each cut Dimo would say, "You will not cut off another." When all the heads were cut off, and Dimo was dead, Salamone took the woman and the cattle, and they removed from that place and went and built a house in another part of the country.

Now war had scattered the tribe from which Salamone had fled, and among the refugees was the servant who had warned Salamone of the machinations of his enemies. In his flight he came to the house of Salamone, who asked him whence he had come. He told the story of the war and how the people had fled, and said, "Your mother and some



other people are just behind, quite near." Salamone sent him to call his mother, and when she came he slaughtered a beast for her, and while the meat was still in the pot on the hearth, he told some one to give her some of the soup in a bowl; but while she was still drinking the soup he pushed the bowl into her face. The hot soup entered her mouth and nostrils and she died. Then Salamone took the people back to their deserted town and became their chief, for their former chief had been killed in the war.

*The Lion and the Hare.*

The hare once said to the lion, "Come, let us make a fold for the beasts." The lion agreed, whereupon the hare cried out, "Fold make thyself," and it made itself. Then the hare said to the lion, "You lie down and pretend to be dead, and I will call all the beasts together, then rise up and kill them." The lion lay down as if he were dead and the hare climbed up the poles at the opening into the fold and cried, "Beeeee! come and see Malacwi dead." Now Malacwi is the name by which the lion was known to the hare and the other beasts of the field. All the beasts of the field came and entered the fold. But the tortoise took a stalk of grass and poked it into the lion from behind, which thereupon drew itself away from the stalk. Then said the tortoise to its young one, "Little tortoise, my child, let us get away from here, for there is no dead thing that can

draw itself in on being touched"; and they went away. Then Malacwi arose and killed the beasts.

Then the hare said, "Let us say 'house build thyself.'" The lion replied, "Just speak, it is you who know everything." Then the rain came and the lion said, "Let the house be roofed." To this the hare answered, "I know how to call the grass," and the lion asked that the grass be called. The hare then said, "Grass mow thyself," and it was not only mown, but it brought itself to the place where they were. Then said the lion, "Let the roof be thatched," but the hare answered, "Ah, that is far beyond me." The lion was astonished, and said, "Oh, what do you mean; is it possible that one who knows how to make things make themselves does not know how to make a thatch put itself on?" Then the lion climbed on the roof while the hare remained below twisting sinews together. While he was doing this he said to the lion, "Let sparks come through the rafters lest you perish with cold." And to this the lion agreed. So the hare made a fire and on the coals grilled some fat meat. When the meat was cooked, he tied the sinew to the lion; then he placed a piece of the fat meat on the end of a stick and said to the lion, "May I swallow this, my elder brother?" But the lion in a fierce voice cried out, "Put it down." Then the hare pulled the sinew with which he had tied the lion, and the lion feeling the pain, cried out, "Oshe! oshe!" whereupon the hare broke off the branch from a piece of wood and said to it, "May

this piece of wood kill my elder brother." He went on doing this until the lion was dead.

When he had killed the lion he ate all the food, and after the lion's skin had become dried up and all the flesh and bones had fallen out of it he entered into it in the evening and went to the house of the hyena, and, speaking in a gruff voice, said, "Push out your food, push out your food," and the hyena pushed it out and the little hyenas spent the night hungry. This went on for some time, until the little ones grew quite thin. Now one day when the sun was well up and the mother hyena was away, the little ones saw the hare come out of the shrivelled-up skin, and dance and sing, "I am a great hare; I have conquered the hyena and the lion. I conquer the hyena." When evening came the little hyenas told their mother what they had seen and heard, and she said, "Well, we shall see." Later on the hare in the lion's skin came speaking as formerly, but the hyena took no notice, just remained at ease, but she took the stone on which her pot stood on the fire and threw it at the skin, whereupon there came the hollow sound from the skin, and the hare burst out and fled, leaving the skin behind. Then the hare fled away in earnest and went to visit another hyena and found his wife weeding in the garden patch, and said to her, "Mother, seeing you are alone, please let me nurse your children for you, and afterwards cook for you." The hyena agreed. On the morrow the hyena went to her garden as usual and left the hare with the children. The

hare looked well after them that day. On the next day she again left them in the charge of the hare. The young hyenas were all of one colour, all being very dark skinned. But on this day the hare killed one of them. When towards evening the mother hyena returned home the hare set flesh before her. She asked whence the meat had come, to which the hare replied that while the children were playing he had gone out and hunted young duiker. "Well! well!" said the hyena. When the hyena had eaten she called for her children that she might suckle them. The hare went to bring the children. Now, as they were ten, he brought one twice.

On the morrow he remained with them again and killed a second one. This also he cooked and gave to the mother, and she ate once more. When she called for her young ones to be brought he brought the eighth one three times, thus making up the number to ten. Day after day he killed one of the cubs and acted as formerly. At last, when none was left, the hare was told to bring his younger brothers that they might suck their mother. The hare appeared as if he did not understand, and asked who were his younger brothers. The hyena replied, "Your younger brothers, whom you know." "I don't know them, mother," was the hare's reply. "Oh, hare," said the hyena, "they are those little black younger brothers of thine." To which the hare answered, "Don't you know you have eaten them all, and the last of them is the one now in your mouth." The hyena snatched up some-



A GIRL OF THE BAKALAHARI TRIBE.

These people are subject to the Bakwena. They live to-day much as they lived in Livingstone's time.



thing, saying she would kill him, but the hare ran away with the hyena hot on his heels. The hare found a hollow tree and hid himself in it. Then came the hyena to the tree and asked if anyone was inside, saying to the hollow of the tree, "Mmamoro-toroto of the hollow, have you seen a hare pass this way?" She asked this because she saw protruding eyes, though not the body of the hare. Then came an answer from the hollow of the tree, saying, "Where see we the hare, we of the protruding eyes?" The hyena drew near and said, "May this not be it?" Whereupon the hare leaped out and ran for his life. The hyena followed hard behind him and drove him in the direction of the river.

When he got to the river the hare changed himself into a large round stone on the bank of the river. Then along came the hyena and saw the stone, and cried out, saying, "Oh, one might possibly see the hare on the other side of the river." So she took up the stone and threw it across the stream, saying as she did so, "Freeeee! Tee!" The hare stood up on the other side, stood upright and cried, "I knew that it would be you, my mother, who would help me to cross the river. Has not my elder sister helped me across the swollen stream?" Then the hyena almost broke her heart.

*The Baboon and the Hyena.*

Once upon a time a baboon asked a hyena to accompany him to his ancestral home. They went

together, and when they arrived the maternal uncles of the baboon gave him an ox. On the day of their departure the baboon told the hyena to go on ahead driving the ox, and he would catch him up on the road. The hyena went at a great pace because his heart was full of the desire to eat the ox; and so, when he had got some way ahead he fell upon the ox and killed it, so that when the baboon caught him up he found only the flesh of the ox, and the hyena butting around striking against everything in his way, because he had been suddenly affected with an attack of ophthalmia.

“Whatever is the matter?” asked the baboon, and the hyena replied that the ox had run away from him as he was driving it, and so he had seized it and put it to death, saying that they would know where they had it if it was on the ground. But the baboon doubted and was far from satisfied. The hyena then went about blinking with his sore eyes, and so the baboon, taking a pointed stick in his hands, went and dug up a bulb which is called *Ñògwe*. When he had dug it up and prepared it he called to the hyena and said, “Come here and let me doctor you.” The hyena came and the baboon anointed his eyes with the medicine he had made, whereupon the hyena began to leap about striking himself against every obstacle that came in his way, and crying out “*E more moñ?*” (What medicine is this?), to which the baboon replied, “It is *ñògwe*. You have eaten my ox and I have sought *ñògwe* for you.” (*Ñògwe* is the noise



made by a baboon when it calls and *More moñ* is that made by the hyena as it calls in the night.)

*The Fox and the Hyena.*

A fox once said to a hyena, "Come, let us go together and I'll show you where there is some food." They went together and he took him to a sheep-fold (the modern tale says it was the sheep-fold of a Boer). They found the sheep were penned therein for the night, but going round the walls they discovered a small opening through which they could enter into the fold, so they crept inside. Ere long they had killed many sheep and ate them. Every now and again, however, the fox left off eating and went to the opening in the wall and tried if he could still creep out. Soon he found that his stomach was so full that he could only barely make his escape, and so he went off altogether, leaving the hyena still enjoying himself in the fold. The hyena had only one thought and that was to eat, so he kept his head fixed to the meat. After a while he too wanted to get away, but when he tried to get through the opening he found that only the fore part of him could get out and he was held fast owing to the size to which his stomach had grown. When it began to dawn the owner of the sheep came to the fold and found the hyena there. The hyena was beaten until at last with a snap at his beater he fled, more than filled with the beating he had received.

He went off and eventually came across the fox,

whom he charged with being a humbug and a traitor, but the fox made as if he was badly hurt, laid himself out on the ground and rubbed himself, saying, "Oh, my elder brother, they have killed me, take me up on your back." And the hyena took him on his back. No sooner had the fox got on to the back of the hyena than he began to sing and laugh at his humbug, saying, "The dead one is carrying the living." The hyena heard him and cast him down to the ground, whereupon the fox took to his heels. When he had got a little way from the hyena he sat down, but he saw the hyena coming after him, so he ran into a cave, and when the hyena got there he found the fox holding up the roof with all his might. The hyena was very angry with the fox, but the latter said, "Oh, my brother, hold this roof up, we shall be buried by it, hold it up first, then by and by you can beat me, but don't let it go, while I go to seek a pole with which to hold it up." The hyena agreed to this and the fox went off.

While the hyena was still holding the roof up and awaiting the return of the fox with the pole, the baboons whose house the cave was arrived, and when they saw the hyena they asked, "Why are you holding up our house?" The hyena replied, "The fox said it was falling down." Then the baboons ordered the hyena to clear, saying, "Get out, it is not falling." Once again the hyena set out to follow up the fox, whom he found at the hole in which the bees had made their nest, holding in its paw a piece of honey-

comb, and pretending to be reading. The hyena said to the fox, "You scoundrel, this day you shall die." The fox replied, "Yes, I know, there is no doubt about it; I am really in the wrong, and I do not ask to be let off my punishment, but you know to-day is Sunday and you should listen to what is going on inside here. The school children are singing, and I also have a book and am reading." The hyena then bowed his head and heard the buzzing of the bees, and said, "It is true." Then said the fox, "That was why I said 'Not to-day,' but you can kill me to-morrow. And you can have a book and sing." "But where shall I get a book?" asked the hyena. "Oh, you just take one for yourself," was the reply of the fox. "Just go into the hole and take one, you will find them on the top." The hyena went in to get himself a book, but the bees swarmed about him and stung him in the eyes, and the fox ran away.

*Masilo and Masilonyane.*

Once upon a time Masilo went to the home of his ancestors to beg from them an ox. They gave one to him and he slaughtered it and hung the meat on the trees and then went to the river. Arriving at the river he sat down by the side of a pool and began to sing :

*Thalaka, Thalaka, Chwedio !  
Chwidi, ke le mañ we ?  
Ke sebata sa Barena,  
Ke batla kgomo, ke humanegile.*

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The interpretation of which is

Python, python, Chwedio (a whistling sound)

Chwidi, who am I?

I am the animal of the chiefs,

I seek an ox, I am poor.

Then out of the water came a thing with horns and it ate the meat which was by the side of the pool. Masilo fled and went to his home, but the thing went back into the water because he had run away. The name of this thing is Kgomodumo.

When his maternal uncles heard of it they reviled him, calling him a simpleton, but they gave him other two oxen, saying he had fled from oxen only. Afterwards his younger brother, Masilonyane, went to his relatives and they gave him an ox also. Like his elder brother he slaughtered it and went and sat at the pool after placing the meat on the trees. He sat there singing as his elder brother had done, and soon this thing came out of the water and ate the meat that was by the side of the pool. Masilonyane went backwards and stood beside some of the meat. The thing came and ate it. Then Masilonyane stepped back and back from tree to tree hiding himself behind them as he went.

In the end the thing ate all the meat, following Masilonyane as he went until it reached his home with him. He went into the yard of his house but the thing went into the cattle fold, and having arrived there it proceeded to cast out of its mouth oxen and goats and sheep. It also brought up a

woman, who became the wife of Masilonyane—the name of the woman being Kammetla. When Masilo saw that his brother had got a wife he was very sad and angry and he killed his brother and cast him into a pit. But a snake in the pit curled itself around the body and came to the surface with it and took it home. Then it leaped upon and curled itself round Masilo and took him with it to the pit. Masilonyane then sang :

*Kammetla, Kammetla, lere metse kwano,  
Ke tlhape, ke gu gamèlè,  
Ñwana a kgomo dikhibidu.  
A di tshetwe madi colthe ?*

Kammetla, Kammetla, bring water hither,  
That I may wash and go and milk for you,  
Child of the red oxen.  
Have they all had blood poured on them.

### *The Stembuck and the Tortoise.*

The stembuck (a small antelope) used to boast a lot about his speed in running. One days he boasted of it to the tortoise, whom he belittled, saying, "Are you anybody? Can you run?" "Yes," was the tortoise's reply, "I am somebody, and I can outpace you." Then the stembuck suggested that they should run a race, to which the tortoise agreed. On the next morning they went to the appointed place where the race was to be begun. The stembuck said, "Let us go," and he ran and left the tortoise from the start. After a while the stembuck stopped running

and cried out, "Tortoise, where are you?" and the tortoise replied, "I am here." To this the stembuck merely replied with the word "*N̄anwe*." A bit further on it stopped again and shouted, "Where are you, Tortoise?" and again came the reply, "I am here." Thus it went on, the stembuck stopping and shouting, "Where are you?" and the tortoise replying, "I am here," until the stembuck came to the goal. When he arrived at the winning-post he looked behind him, and the tortoise said, "I am here; I have got in before you," and there he found the tortoise standing by the pole that had been placed for the winning-post.

But the tortoise had played a trick on the stembuck. During the night he had gathered many tortoises together and had placed them every here and there along the track in the grass by the wayside. So when the stembuck stopped and asked where the tortoise was he found one at his side—one that had been placed there the night before. On this account the proverb comes: "There is no speed, there are hard bones."

#### *Mosebodi and Mosebotsane.*

One day Mosebotsane came to her father and said, "Mosebodi has eaten the fruit of my tree." So the father killed Mosebodi. Now a big wind arose and snatching up one of the ribs of Mosebodi carried it into the river. When the girls went to the river with Mosebotsane they said to her, "Go and bring



A BUSHMAN GIRL.  
The Bechuana call these people Masarwa.





rushes for our water-pots," and while she was away they put coarse sand into her vessel so that it became very heavy. Then the girls said, "Let us put our water-pots on our heads and take them home." But Mosebotsane was unable to lift her pot to her head on account of its weight through the sand that had been placed in it. She asked the others to help her to put it on her head, but they all refused, saying, "She has destroyed her elder sister, and railed at her, let others help her to put it on her head." Then Mosebotsane remained behind weeping.

There came a hippopotamus out of the water and said to her, "Mosebotsane! Mosebotsane! Are you crying? Your father and mother have killed your elder sister, saying, 'You will be helped to put things on your head by others.'" Now the rib of Mosebodi which had been cast into the river by the wind was made into a person in the water by the hippopotamus and the crocodile, and she came out of the water, risen up to speak to her sister. Mosebotsane was then helped by her sister to put the pot on her head. When she arrived at her home she told her parents, saying, "I was helped with my water-pot by a person at the river." Thereupon her father went to the river to lie in wait for the person who came to the spot where the girls drew their water. There he met with his child, Mosebodi, whom he had killed. The daughter had been raised up by the hippopotamus and the crocodile, they had made a person with the rib of Mosebodi.

*Another Tale concerning Bilo and Bilwane.*

Once upon a time, long, long ago, there were two boys named Bilo and Bilwane who lived at the cattle post. There came to the post girls who came of their own accord to where the boys were. Bilo and Bilwane found they loved the same girl. They gave food to the other girls, who returned to their homes; but the two of them slaughtered a beast for the woman they both loved. They slaughtered each a sheep. Afterwards Bilwane went to the chief and charged his brother with killing the chief's sheep. The chief sent for Bilo and questioned him about the charge, which he denied. Then as the chief had also sent for Bilwane he questioned both of them, and Bilwane maintained that the charge was true, while Bilo just as emphatically denied that it was a sheep belonging to the chief that he had slaughtered. Bilo was put to death and Bilwane took to wife the widow of his elder brother. But the woman sang, "Bilwane has taken for himself the wife of Bilo and his child."

*The Water-wagtail, the Tom-tit and the Chameleon.*

In the ages long gone by the water-wagtail, the tom-tit and the chameleon were never killed; but if a child happened to kill one of these it was taken to its grandmother and an ox was killed as a sacrifice, in order that it might be purified from the guilt of killing that which was forbidden to be killed. When

the ox was killed the child was dressed in the flesh of the sacrifice, and was anointed with the fat, into which black and red ochre had been put. Then the child had to walk about the environs of the house crying out, "I have killed; I have killed the water-wagtail," or whatever it was of the three had been killed. But if no purification took place then the child would grow thin, become emaciated and consume away.

*The Tom-tit.*

Once the tom-tit called a meeting of the birds, to which all gathered. At that time it was the king of the birds. When it had announced the purpose of their gathering they laughed at it because it was so small a bird. But the tom-tit said to them, "I don't destroy anything belonging to people, but all of you will eat the things of the people and they will kill you; you will be all killed, for you will all become thieves."

*The Jackal and the Tortoise.*

The jackal was very very fond of the flesh of the small beasts of the field, and longed to partake of it every day and all day long. One day a tortoise met a blue crane and said to it, "We are much sought after by the jackal; yonder it is, it is coming and it will take and eat me. Tell me what I can do." The crane replied, "When he comes catch hold of my tail and I will fly away with you." So when the

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jackal drew near the tortoise caught hold of the tail of the crane with its teeth, because, of course, it had no hands. But the jackal began to despise and belittle the tortoise, shouting to it, "Wae! the tortoises are wrinkled and old!" He wanted, of course, so to revile the tortoise that it would open its mouth and reply, so the tail of the crane would come out of its mouth, and it would fall to the ground. The tortoise retorted, "You are lying; I am not old and wrinkled," and so saying it left hold of the tail and fell. Then said the jackal, "Whom did you refer to when you said, 'You lie'?" and the tortoise replied, "I did not mean you, my elder brother." But the jackal grabbed the tortoise and ate it.

## CHAPTER XIX

### Proverbs

**T**HE language of the Bechuana people is very rich in proverbs and wise sayings. No conversation of any great length takes place without one or more saws being brought into it, and the way in which the native scholar, unable to read or write, can make an apt point by the introduction of only part of a proverb reveals to us that his mind is not that of the mere illiterate, but one trained by much use to the application of suitable references to the most intricate affairs.

The writer here offers a few of the many hundred of these proverbs, with a literal translation. Several will be found to be almost a literal equivalent of European proverbs, while others bear a wonderful similarity to them, the only difference being in the circumstances of the two races. Take, for instance, that wherein we have the moon calling the sun white; naturally there would be no point in two black things upbraiding each other because of their colour. To us it is the kettle that reviles the pan for its blackness, but to the Bechuana it is the whiteness that calls for contempt.

If the reader is interested in proverbs he will find a very abundant supply in the collection made by Mr. Solomon T. Plaatje.

*Proverbs.*

*A ñwedi oa tla a tshege letsatsi, a re, U moshweu?*  
Does the moon laugh at the sun, saying "You are white?"

*A u ruta chwene mapalamò?* Are you teaching the baboon to climb?

*A u shugèla ñwana thari mpeñ?* Are you making a carrying skin for the unborn child?

*Ba èpèla selèpè.* They are burying the hatchet.

*Ba keledi tsa mathe.* They whose tears are made of spittle (crocodile tears).

*Bana ba bua le Modimo.* Children talk with God.

*Banna ga ba na thwadi, ba bonywe ke Mma-mariga.*  
There is no difference in men, they have been found out by Mrs. Winter.

*Boberehere ga se papadi.* Cunning isn't business.

*Boyañ ga bo ke bo boha boyañ yo boñwe.* Grass doesn't bind other grass.

*Boilhale ga bo na ntlo ea yòna.* Wisdom has no dwelling of her own.

*Choshwane e romile tlou.* An ant once sent an elephant on an errand.

*Chukudu e e senañ ñwana e ikisa kgobeñ.* The rhinoceros which has no calf takes itself to the muddy pool.

*Chukudu ga e ke e cwa sekgweñ hèla, ea bo e utlwile*

*botlhoko.* The rhinoceros does not leave the wood unless it has been hurt.

*Coga, u le gatetse.* Arise, you have trodden it. (Cheer up, you have passed the crisis.)

*Di sela mmapa ga di ratane.* They who gather side by side do not love each other.

*Di tsa bana ba mpa ga di tsenwe.* Affairs of the family are not to be entered into (by strangers).

*Ditsèbè di ea molato di sa o lalediwe.* Ears that have not been invited witness a matter.

*Ea re letsatsi le gu tlhabetse u le aramèlè, u gopola le tsèna leruñ.* When the sun shines bask in it, remembering that it may go behind the cloud.

*E e mashi ga e itsale.* A good milch cow doesn't necessarily give birth to a good milker.

*E e senañ mènò ea lomèlwa.* The one without teeth must get others to bite for it.

*E tla re ke re ke dipitse ke bone mebala ea còna.* I shall believe they are zebras when I see their stripes.

*E tlhale e amusa e eme, e tshilo e amusa e letse.* The wise dam suckles its young while standing up, the foolish one suckles hers lying down.

*Ga se go oo lobelò, go marapò a a thata.* Not to the swift, but to the enduring (is the race).

*Goa shwa motho go sale motho.* When a man dies, a man remains.

*Go ha ua bo u ipeèla.* To give (food) is to put by for yourself.

*Go lepa goa diia.* To gaze long hinders (Procrastination is the thief of time).

*Go mo tla moshogotlhò.* To come dangerously near.

*Goo ra motho go thèbè phachwa.* A man's home is a black and white (good) shield.

*Go segò eo o tsetseñ ñwana oa mosetsana ; oa mosimane morwa mogwagadiagwe.* Happy is she who has borne a daughter, a boy is the son of his mother-in-law.

*Hibiñ go chwaragañwa ka dikobò.* In the dark people hold on to one another's cloaks.

*Itaea tshipi e sale khwibidu.* Strike the iron while it is still red.

*Ke ha gare ga naka tsa nare.* I am between the horns of the buffalo.

*Khudu ea mariga e itsiwe ke mmei.* Where the winter tortoise is known only to him who placed it there.

*Khudu e dule logapeñ.* The tortoise is out of the shell.

*Lala ka lobadi.* Sleep over your wound.

*Leshwetsana ga le lele hèla lea bo le utlwa mashwedi a magolo.* The young bird doesn't crow until it hears the old ones.

*Lomaò lo lo ntlha pedi lo tlhabe kobò le moroki.* A two-pointed awl pierces both the kaross and the sewer.

*Lencwe ya ma bane ga le tlhabe kgomo.* The evening word does not kill the ox.

*Lehuba le apeecwe le lencwe, ga bucwa lencwe, lehuba ya sala.* Polygamy (jealousy) was boiled with a stone, the stone got soft but polygamy remained.

*Letlatla le motlha moñwe hèla.* Boisterous mirth has only one time, i.e. is ephemeral.





A KAROSS MAKER OF THE BAKWENA TRIBE.

The *kaross*, or skin-robe, is made of the dressed skins of wild animals. The best parts of the skins are cut out and skilfully joined together. An awl is used in sewing. The thread is made of sinew or gut.



*Lencwe le peduñ ga le tshitse.* The word within the heart does not satisfy.

*Maanò ga a site go sita a losho.* Plans do not always overcome, but that of death does.

*Mahoko ga a lale nageñ.* News does not spend a night on the way.

*Magodu ga a cwaane.* Thieves do not fall out.

*Mma ñwana ke eo, o chwara thipa.* This is the mother, she lays hold of the knife (by the blade).

*Maru ga se pula ; musu ke òna molelò.* Clouds are not rain ; smoke means fire.

*Moeñ ñaka, o sidila mmobodi.* The visitor (stranger), like a doctor, heals the sick.

*Moenyana-pele bòne loa oabò.* A harbinger is the lamp of his friends.

*Mogami o anya morokoco.* The milker drinks the milk of the second milking.

*Moipolai ga a lelelwe.* The suicide is not mourned.

*Moroka o sita ka leru.* The rain-maker convinces by the cloud.

*Motho ea re a re podi dia sisa a bo a raea tsabò.* When a man speaks of goats with much milk, he is usually speaking of his own.

*Motse o lwapeñ.* The home is in the courtyard (women's quarters).

*Ñwana-mma o anya nyetsana.* The aunt's child sucks the childless mother.

*Ñwana oa ntlha molekana oa ga rragwe.* The first child is the companion of its father.

*Ñwana o sa utkweñ molaò oa ga rragwe o tla utlwa*

*oa manoñ.* The child that listens not to his father's commands will obey the law of the eagles.

*Nòga e itomile mogatla.* The snake has bitten its own tail.

*Ntlha ea kgosi e iwa ke Modimo.* God is (generally) on the side of the chief.

*O dule ka choba ya mogodu.* He has got out by the hole in the paunch.

*O itsetse hèla yaka peba.* He has begotten himself just as a mouse does. (Like father, like son.)

*O loleme.* She has a long tongue.

*O matlhò mantsi.* He has many eyes (i.e. is attracted by everything in turn).

*O upa maraka tau e setse e tlhasetse.* He charms his cattle post after the lion has attacked.

*Pala gabedi e sitile pala gañwe hela.* Count twice has overcome count once.

*Phala e ruta diphhalana matlolo.* The antelope teaches its young to leap.

*Phoko-kgolo ga e cwe ka ñwana motho.* Scandal doesn't come through the well-born child.

*Pòò ga di ke di tlhakanèla lesaka.* Two bulls do not share the same cattle kraal.

*Re dulwe ke Modimo.* We are forsaken of God.

*Sedibana se pele ga se ikañwe.* The water pool ahead is not to be depended on.

*Se ileñ sea bo se ile, lesilo ke mo se-latedi.* What has gone has gone, he is a fool who goes after it.

*Setsetse se bolawa ke namane.* The mother is killed

by the calf (i.e. the mother comes to her death by returning to the calf newly born).

*Se tshege eo o oleñ mareledi a sale pele.* Don't laugh at the fallen, there are still slippery places on ahead.

*Tau ga di adimane mènò.* Lions don't lend each other their teeth.

*Tau ga e ke e tsala leñau.* A lion never breeds a leopard.

*Thukhu o rile ke lobelò, marota a re ke namile.* The little wolf said I am swift-footed, but the undulating country said I am wide.

*Tsela mocopodia ga e latse nageñ.* The roundabout way does not compel one to spend the night in the open.

*U bonya u tla loñwa ke nòga maoto ao mabedi.* You are so slow that a snake could bite you on both feet.

*U tla bo u kgotlile semane.* You will have stirred up a wasp's nest.

## CHAPTER XX

### A Sketch of the History of the Bechuana Tribes

#### THE TRIBES OF THE SOUTHERN AREA

**J**UST as ancient Greece consisted, not of one nation well knit together by one national aim, but of a number of states of varying importance, oft warring against each other, as Sparta and Athens, yet sometimes combining forces against a common foe, as when the Persians attacked, so is it with the people called Bechuana. There is no history common to the whole, but is that of the various tribes and clans, commingling at times, but with no common bond of nationality holding them together. As we have already seen in a former part of this book, the forces that made for disintegration were stronger than any that tended to union. Where union came it was generally as a result of conquest.

There are several tribes of the old Bechuana that have become absorbed into other tribes and their history has been buried in the oblivion of the past. We know that when the Barolong tribe and its offshoot, the Batlhaping, still living together as one tribe, came south there were already two or three

tribes, or perhaps it would be truer to say clans, living in what is now the Free State and the Southern Transvaal. Very little is known of these tribes; even the remaining representatives of them, found in other tribes, know nothing of their story, and only the names of Digoya, Bataung or Batsatsing still live. Legoya was their chief and the Bataung and Batsatsing called themselves, or were called by others, Digoya after him. When the fierce Basuto tribes of Mantatees raided their country they were scattered in every direction and were eventually picked up by the Barolong and Batlhaping of Tau (the lion) and became absorbed into that tribe.

The history which follows is merely a sketch of the principal tribes now existing as such. The Bakaa or Bakaea, the Baphaleng and the Banageng do not occupy any territory of their own, but while they retain their distinctive names and have their own totems, they are found dwelling within and under suzerainty of other tribes.

### *The Batlhaping.*

This tribe is found chiefly in Southern Bechuana-land and in the Western Transvaal. At one time a considerable number lived on the banks of the Vaal and Hartz rivers. The headquarters of the tribe to-day is at Taungs. The first chief whose name is recalled by the tribe is Mamae, the father of Tau, who is also known as Phuduhudu (stembuck), but

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some say that he was the uncle of Phuduhudu. At any rate, Phuduhudu seems to be the first of the line of chiefs from whose accession they date their history. Phuduhudu was a lazy chief, fonder of ease than the welfare of the tribe and security of his chieftainship, so his younger brother, Phuduhuchwane (the little stembuck) stole away the hearts of the people and became their chief. It was during his rule that the Batlhaping broke away from the Barolong. At that time they were living together at Taungs and the breach came about through the constant wrangling of the two sections of the tribe. Those who were afterwards to be known as the Batlhaping (people of the fish) moved to the banks of the Vaal river and began to use fish as part of their diet, hence their name. At and near the river they came into contact with Koranna and Bushmen and intermarried with them. It is through these intermarriages that so many light coloured and undersized people are found in the tribe.

Now while they were living at the River Tau, the Barolong chief recalled them to Taungs. Phuduhudu obeyed the call, and, travelling by way of the river, he collected all the scattered members of his following, but when he arrived at Taungs he feigned deafness, as he very much doubted the peaceful intentions of the elder branch of the family, and thought that, if treachery were intended, he would have a better chance of learning it if it were thought he was deaf. His people, by arrangement with him, informed the



others that the old chief was very deaf and could hear nothing, and that if they wished him to hear anything they must shout. They went to him and shouted, but all they got in reply was, "What do you say? I don't hear." In that way he completely deceived the Barolong. One day, believing that the Phuduhuchwane could not hear, the Barolong began to talk in his presence of the wisdom of teaching his younger branch of the tribe that they were their masters. Phuduhuchwane heard their plans to surround the Batlhaping at night, fall on them at the dawn, and so bring them into submission. He called his people and told them of the intended treachery. They decided to flee at once, leaving the old chief behind, at his own request. But in order that the Barolong might not know they had gone they left in the kraal some rams and young ewe goats. The rams kept up a noise the whole night through, while the people, with their hastily gathered possessions, fled in the darkness. According to plan the Barolong surrounded their camp, but when dawn came, to their chagrin they found only the old chief, whose reply to every question about his people was "What do you say? I don't hear."

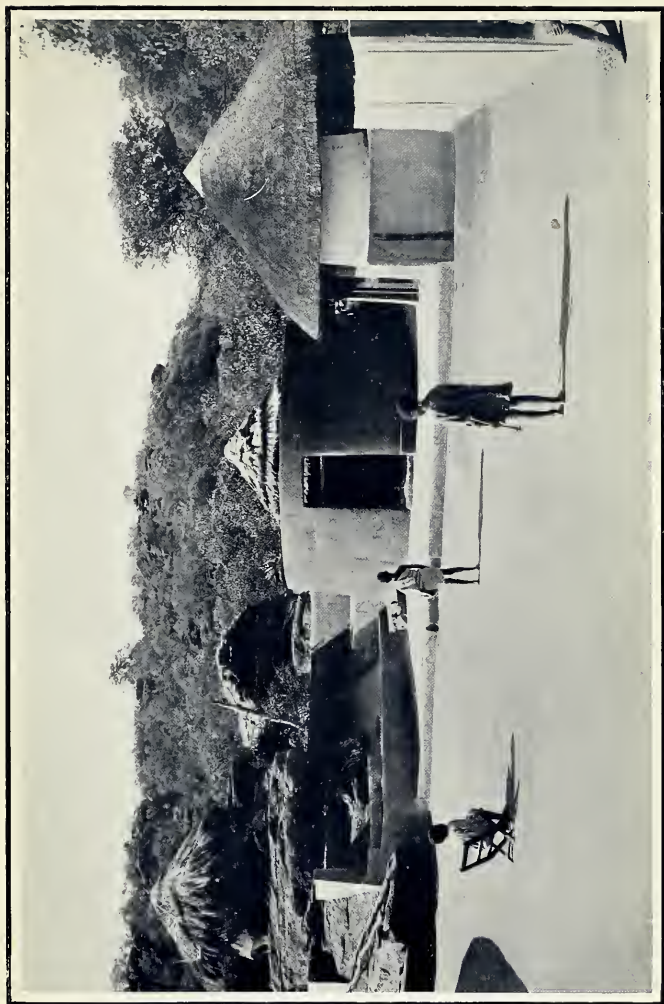
The Barolong set off in pursuit and came up with them at Dikgatlhong, the junction of the Hartz and Vaal rivers, sheltering in caves on the banks of the Hartz. But they were not alone. With them were their Bushmen and Koranna kin. An engagement took place and the Barolong were badly beaten by

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the combined forces, who followed the scattered enemy, drove them to Taungs, attacked and captured the town and drove them out of their town. Here the Batlhaping made their home, while the Barolong fled to the north and west. The Batlhaping also began to spread themselves over the country, going as far west as the Kuruman river, and having a large settlement at Dithakong (Takoon), where they were found by Campbell in 1812 living under their chief Mothibi; but in 1805 they were found at what is now the European town of Kuruman, at which place they had cattle posts, as well as lower down the river of that name. Lichtenstein, the great traveller, found branches of this tribe living in the Kuruman hills at a place called Gamohana.

While Mothibi was the paramount chief, Molehabangwe ruled over a portion of the tribe. He was not in the direct line of the chieftainship, as he was descended from Mashwe, the nephew of Tau, who had ruled over that branch of the tribe that had made Dithakong its home. When Mashwe died he had no son by his chief wife. The child of the great house was a daughter named Manaka, and it was she who gave the chieftainship to Molehabangwe, son of Pikwane, one of Mashwe's inferior wives.

In 1805, when Europeans first came into contact with the Batlhaping, Molehabangwe was about sixty years old and his son, Mothibi, about thirty. At this time the Batlhaping were at constant feud with the Bushmen and Koranna, who captured their cattle



A COURTYARD IN A BECHUANA VILLAGE.



and harried them badly. After the death of Mashwe his widow, the mother of Molehabangwe, married again and had another son named Monnametse. This man became one of his half-brother's chief councillors. He was a great warrior and made several raids on neighbouring tribes, some being very unsuccessful. Among others he raided the Griquas and Koranna, who at last took the warpath against the Batlhaping, and at Moshweu, not far from Vryburg, they captured their cattle posts. At Dithakon, which they touched on their return home with the captured cattle, Molehabangwe gave them a present of a wild ox for food. But the ox ran away and the Koranna went after it, leaving their weapons at the camp. Seeing this, the Batlhaping fell on the unarmed men and completely routed them.

About the year 1811 a raiding party of Zulus fell upon Molehabangwe's people, part of whom fled with the cattle, while the rest defended the town, but the Zulus compelled them to evacuate their town and flee. In their flight they crossed the Kalahari desert, reached Ovamboland and the shores of the Atlantic. Meeting there with people whom they considered cannibals they fled back to the less dangerous locality of their own country. In 1812 Molehabangwe died, and was succeeded by his son Mothibi, whose younger brothers Mahura and Molale, together with Molema, ruled parts of the tribe under him. It was during this reign that the Batlhaping began to break up into sections, about the year 1830. Mothibi went with his

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section to the Vaal river. He died at Bodigelo, having embraced Christianity before his death. His son, Petlo, had died in 1825 and the heir being under age, Mahura, the grandson of Molehabangwe, became regent. Gasebonwe, another of his sons, had hived off to Bodigelo with the people who rejected Christianity, and Janke, his son by a Koranna woman, really his eldest son in years, but not in position owing to his mother's birth, was the chief of the section whom Mothibi had taken to the river. From then onwards the tribe, first one section and then another, was at constant war with their neighbours. Acts of treachery led to reprisals and peace was unknown.

In 1857 the Batlhaping came to blows with the Dutch settlers of the Free State and the Transvaal. The Dutch were at war with the Basuto, and during the absence of the farmers one Kousop, a Bushman chief, fell upon the undefended farms near his town, killed women and children, captured the cattle and looted the homesteads, and, having crossed the Vaal river with the spoil, fled to Gasebonwe, who was then living at Taungs with his section of the tribe. The sight of so much spoil roused the greed of the Batlhaping, and Phohuetsile, son of the chief, and Boyon, together with Motlhabani, chief of the Bamaidi, set out to raid, and capturing cattle and horses, returned to their homes. But the Boers did not accept quietly the massacre of their wives and children and looting of their cattle. They gathered together and followed the spoor of the stolen cattle,

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killed the Bushman chief and scattered his people. Phohuetsile, attempting to surround the Boers, was killed, and his forces driven away, while the chief also fell in the fight. The Boers cut off his head and sent it in a sack to Taungs. In this engagement the Bamaidi also lost heavily.

Now though Mahura was at Taungs at the time of the raid it is very doubtful if he was in favour of it, but it was done by his people, and so the Boers came to Taungs and demanded reparations. They demanded that the raiders should be given up and the cattle restored to them. Mahura refused, and a battle ensued in which the Boers were victorious. Mahura's sons entered into an agreement to restore the cattle, horses and guns, and to hand over ten of the murderers, and in addition to pay an indemnity. They further agreed that if the reparations were not paid within three months the Boers should have the right to a strip of their country. Although Janke and his people, living far away at the junction of the Vaal and Hartz rivers, had had no part either in the raid or the subsequent battles, the Boers threatened to march on Kuruman, which was in his territory, and destroy the church there. But Sir George Grey, Governor of the Cape, intervened, as such action would involve war with the British Government, for the church was the property of British missionaries.

In 1878 the Griquas rose in rebellion at Griquatown, where there lived members of the Xosa, Koranna, Basuto and Bechuana tribes, all mixed together with

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the Griquas in the one neighbourhood. Like so many other risings the cause of the war was suspicion fostered by agitators, who affirmed that in the Káffir wars the white men had been conquered and large numbers slain, so that their power was broken and the time was opportune for the deliverance of their land from European government, and for the looting of Europeans' goods. The agitators had success among the inhabitants of Griqualand West, and also among some of the Batlhaping, but the leading chiefs of the latter refused to have any part or lot in the rising. However, some of the followers of Janke, in spite of their chief, took the field under Luka, Janke's son, as did also the people of Mere at Dithakong. Luka's men gave battle to the Europeans at Koo, and an engagement took place also at Manyeering. Forces were sent up from Kimberley and a further battle was fought at Gamopedi on the Kuruman river, where the Batlharo, under Morwe, their chief, who had besieged Kuruman, had assembled their forces. The natives were defeated and scattered. Meanwhile the Batlhaping had gathered at Dithakong. Mere refused to discuss terms of surrender, but after an engagement the Batlhaping were severely defeated, and much stock was captured. The European forces in this campaign were led by General Sir Charles Warren, who, because he wore an eyeglass, was named by the natives Rragalase, a name by which he is known to this day.

In the year 1881, when Mankurwane was the ruling



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chief at Taungs, trouble arose between the Batlhaping and the Koranna, who lived at Mamusa under Moshweu. Mankurwane, assisted by white mercenaries, attacked, but he failed to capture Moshweu's town and had to return home. In 1882 he made another attempt, and again was defeated and his forces driven back. On the advice of a friend Moshweu asked the help of the Boers, offering them land as payment for their services, and to him many flocked. Mankurwane then sought the help of the Cape Government, but his appeal met with a refusal. Nevertheless several Europeans came to his assistance, drawn by the promise that they would receive farms in payment for their help. During this time of strife Botlhasitse, the son of Gasebonwe, who was living at Phokwane with his section of the Batlhaping, held aloof, refusing to help Mankurwane as he was not on friendly terms with him. As the outcome of the trouble Mankurwane had to resign himself to the loss of much land, which the Boers took and which he could not defend. On July 26th a treaty of peace was made and a boundary between the Transvaal and Bechuanaland was fixed. Huhudi, now known as Vryburg, became a town, and the land for many miles to the west as well as that to the east was cut up into farms, and the republic of Stellaland was formed. Mankurwane then appealed to the British Government for protection to save what was left of his country. Moshweu also realized that the men he had called to his aid had come to stay, and their leader sought

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to have his country taken in the name of the Transvaal. It looked as if all the native land would be taken from them. The Batlhaping were driven from the Morokane hills and from the Hartz river, and the Boers were preparing to take Taungs. The Koranna were capturing their cattle posts, wives, children and goods. At last the British Government intervened and the country came under the protection of Great Britain.

In 1884 the whole country from the Vaal to the Molopo, and from the Transvaal border to the country now known as the South-West Protectorate, became a British Crown Colony under the name of British Bechuanaland. The many causes of strife between the natives were smoothed over, the boundary between the Colony and the Transvaal was fixed and Moshweu's land became Transvaal territory, and his people had to pay tribute to its Government. To this Moshweu objected, and his town was attacked and wiped out, and on its site the town of Schweizer Reneke now stands.

In 1896 South Africa was visited by the pestilence called rinderpest, which, coming from the north, swept whole herds of cattle away in its march south. The Government, now that of the Cape, for the Crown Colony had been annexed to the Cape in the previous year, took steps to prevent the spread of the disease into the country south of the Vaal. These precautions roused suspicion and fear among the natives, and were used by the enemies of the Cape Government to stir up strife. The Batlhaping of

Phokwane, now under the rule of Galeshiwe, rose, cruelly massacred some European traders in their village, and, being defeated in a battle with Colonial troops, fled to the Langberg, where Luka had migrated from Manyeering some years before. They were followed by the European forces, who besieged the mountain for some months. Luka had very reluctantly joined his cousin, Galeshiwe, and probably would not have done so had the leaders of the European troops not given him to understand that he would be held responsible for Galeshiwe's capture. Several of the Batlharo whose home was in the Langberg also joined the fugitives. The end was inevitable, the natives being defeated. Luka, who preferred death in battle to death by judicial process, deliberately rushed out of his shelter and was shot. The natives were captured, their lands declared forfeit, and men, women and children deported to the Cape, where they were indentured as servants to the Europeans for a term of years.

### *The Barolong.*

The Barolong were probably the first of the larger tribes to split off from the parent stem, represented at a later date by the Bahurutshe, as the elder branch, but the date of this separation was before any reliable history began. To quote one of themselves, "It was in the unknown past." But this tribe has handed down from generation to generation traditions of the ancestral home from which all the Bechuana and

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Basuto tribes migrated. The tradition says that the country from which they came was a beautiful land with high mountains and big lakes. For one half of the year the sun was at the opposite side from what it was at the other half. It would appear that they came from the north of the equator, and probably the land of high mountains and big lakes was the country of Tanganyika and Nyasa. The date of the beginning of their migration was probably the beginning of the fifteenth century.

According to tradition their earliest chief was Morolong, whose eldest son was named Noto or "the hammer." From this old chief the tribe took its name. Probably he was given the name as the representative of the "tholo" or koodoo, which was undoubtedly the original totem of the tribe. But there is another totem, viz. the hammer or iron, and this totem must have some connection with Noto, their second traditional chief. One thing is certain, that no member of the Barolong tribe eats the flesh of the koodoo. It is said that Noto taught them the art of forging iron, but the Barolong are not by any means a tribe of smiths. The genealogical tree, as given by them, is very unreliable down to the time of Tau, who was the chief at the time when the Batlhaping hived off from them under Phuduhchwane. It may be that in their list of chiefs one or two shared the rule with others, so it follows that any native genealogical table can only be accepted as comparatively correct. But from the time of Tau



A PRIMITIVE BECHUANA OUTPOST IN THE HILLS.

The larger structures are huts, and the smaller ones are grain-bins. The women are carrying water-pots on their heads.



to the day when the tribe became the ward of the British Crown the data are much more trustworthy.

When the Barolong separated from the rest of the Bechuana they were living on the Molopo river. At first they were not a big section, but they grew in numbers partly by natural increase and partly by the accession to their numbers of wanderers from other tribes. The land they occupied extended from the Molopo on the north to the Modder river on the south, and from the borders of the Kalahari desert on the west, well into the Transvaal on the east. They also roamed in what was known as the Orange Free State. Of course, other peoples, such as the Bushmen and Koranna, shared the land with them. The memory of Tau is not held in kindly reverence by the tribe. He seems to have been of a cruel disposition. He treated the Batlhaping, a younger branch of the tribe, as slaves, and killed in a treacherous manner not only Koranna and Bushmen who fell into his hands, but members of his own tribe. The Koranna rose against him, and at one time drove him and his people back to the north. Not far from Taungs is a hill with steep cliffs, and from this hill he used to have men, women and even children, who displeased him, hurled to death on the rocks beneath. He died at Taungs about the year 1760. After his death the tribe, which was already weakened by the separation of the Batlhaping, broke up into at least four sections, each of which was led by one of Tau's four sons. These sons were named Ratlou, Tshidi,

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Seleka and Rapulane. It was not a peaceable cleavage that took place, but one that almost led to much bloodshed. Tau had a fifth son named Makgetla, but his followers did not form a branch of their own, but joined themselves to the section under Tshidi.

Although Ratlou was not the first-born son of Tau, he was, according to Sechuana custom, his father's successor. His mother, Kabasane, had been betrothed to Tau, as chief wife, when she was a child, and his father had children by his other wives before the marriage was consummated. The first-born son was Seleka, but no one disputed Ratlou's right to the chieftainship. The order of their status is as given above. To-day the descendants of the followers of these sons are to be found at various places in the Union of South Africa and the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Ratlou's section are to be found living at Ganyesa, Motito, Morokweng, Phitshane and Khunwana. Some years ago a number migrated from Phitshane to Ngamiland and are now living in the Ghanzi district. Tshidi's followers' descendants are to be found at Mafeking and in the southern part of the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Seleka's people made their home at Thabanchu, in the Free State, where their descendants are to be found to this day. Rapulane's descendants after many wanderings eventually settled down at and near Rooigrond on the borders of the Transvaal and Bechuanaland.

When the combined forces of Batlhaping, Koranna



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and Bushmen drove Tau and his people from Taungs, they moved first to Dithakong, between Kuruman and Vryburg, after which they simply roamed about the land, having no settled abode. In 1812 they were located at Khunwana, and they were still there when the missionary, Robert Moffat, visited that place in 1824. But it was only a portion of the tribe which made its home at Khunwana. Small communities of Barolong were found scattered over the whole of the district between Dithakong and that town, with villages on the Maritshane river and at Setlagole. The years between 1820 and 1827 were years of constant peril. It was in 1823 that the Bakgare horde, better known as the Mantatees, swooped down upon them like a swarm of locusts, and these in turn were followed by the impis of Moselekatse, who ate up the country like a devouring fire. The Mantatees got as far west as Dithakong, where they were met by the Griquas under Waterboer, and, being defeated, turned their faces once more towards the Barolong settlements, destroyed many of their villages, captured much stock, and killed a large number of the tribe. Eventually, under Sebitwane, they made their way to the Zambezi, where they became known as the all-conquering tribe of Makololo.

It was in this same year of 1823 that part of the tribe, under the leadership of Sehunelo, fleeing from the Mantatees, came first to Motlwase, and later lived for a while at Platberg, and eventually, in 1833, settled at Thabanchu, in the Orange Free State, but

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at that time it was any man's land. In 1824 the Ratlou section of the tribe had their home at Phitshane, where they shared the country with refugees from the Bahurutshe and Bangwaketse tribes, driven into exile by the raiding forces already referred to. Two years later Moselekatse fell upon the Barolong on the Molopo river, and, after a great slaughter, scattered them in every direction. Some of them fled into the Kalahari, where they became impoverished. Matlabe surrendered to the Matabele, but the larger portion, rather than pay tribute of their children and cattle, fled to the south, and joining their forces to their fellow-tribesmen, under Moroko, the great-grandson of Tau, went with him to Thabanchu about the year 1833. Another section, under Maikewwe, went west to Morokweng, while branches of the tribe made temporary homes at Motito and between that place and the Molopo river.

After staying at Thabanchu for about nine years the Ratshidi branch, then under the chieftainship of Montshiwa, returned to Bechuanaland and settled at Mafeking, after the Matabele had been driven north by the Boers of the Transvaal and Dingaan's people.

The coming of the Boers, although it meant the deliverance of the Barolong from the scourge of the Matabele, did not bring peace to the land. To the Barolong it was only changing one inimical force for another, and for many years strife raged between them and the new-comers into the interior of South Africa. Dissensions within the tribe also helped to

keep "sleep" away. At Thabanchu events moved more peacefully. The Boers and the Barolong found one common enemy in the Basuto, and although the land occupied by the descendants of the Barolong to-day is a mere fraction of what their ancestors regarded as their pasture and hunting grounds, still they have progressed towards Christian civilization to a greater extent than any other branch of the Bechuana people.

Although, as we have seen, the right to the paramountcy of the Barolong tribes belongs to the family of Ratlou, the British Government, when it took over the country in 1884, gave the position to Monshiwa of the Ratshidi branch, as he was reigning chief at Mafeking at the time, where the largest section of the tribe resided, and since then his successors have been recognized by the Government as the chiefs of the whole tribe, though the members of the tribe acknowledge the priority of the living descendant of Ratlou as their paramount chief.

About the year 1833 the Barolong began to accept Christianity, and both at Thabanchu and Mafeking they live under the influence of Christian civilization; but the western sections of the tribe living at Morokweng and its neighbourhood have been much slower in accepting Christianity as the rule of their life, and heathen practices are still in force and native rites and customs still operate side by side with an advancing civilization.

*The Bakaa.*

In the history of the Bamangwato we shall read that on arrival at Shoshong they found the hills already in possession of a tribe, called the Bakaa or Bakaea. These people had separated from the Barolong in the seventeenth century and made their way north to the hills of Shoshong. Unlike other tribes they are not named after a chief, nor do they take their name from their totem. It is said that their leaders expressed a wish to the then reigning Barolong chief that they should be allowed to separate and form a tribe of their own. This chief, so unlike the majority of chiefs of native tribes, said to the messengers *Ba ka ea*, which means *They can go*; so the name Bakaa or Bakaea was given to them by the rest of the tribes and remains their name to this day. It is said, however, that they were only allowed to leave after much discussion, and even after a fight. But though they went out from the Barolong tribe they retained the tribal totem and reverence iron, and have the hammer as their crest; but they do not seem to recognize at all the original totem of the tribe, viz. the koodoo.

They made their home at Shoshong and lived there for a long time till they were subdued by the Bamangwato, who having split off from the Bakwena were seeking a new home for themselves. The hills became the home of the conquerors and of their vassals, the Baphaleng. In the days when Sekgome became chief

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of the Bamangwato they were still living at Shoshong, and he sent some of them to live at Molepolole, but after the death of their chief, Mosenyi, they broke up into several branches and they are to be found to-day at Shoshong among the Baphaleng, at Molepolole among the Bakwena, and in smaller groups at other places. Their history is wrapped up in that of the tribes among whom they are found.

One section of this tribe or clan say that they separated from the Barolong at Morokweng, where the Ratlou section of that tribe still resides, that they have rejected the hammer as the emblem of their tribe and have taken the elephant as their totem. The genealogical tree of their chiefs does not go back with any certainty to Tau, one account tracing it directly to him while another gives a collateral stem. However, both accounts trace it from Magogwe, son of Tseme, who was fifth in succession from the original stem, and under whom they separated from the Barolong.

### *The Batlharo.*

Before passing on to the tribes of the Bechuanaland Protectorate we should consider a tribe living in the western part of British Bechuanaland, but which is an offshoot of the Bahurutshe. It is called the Batlharo or Bagamotlhwane tribe. It must have hived off from the parent stem after that tribe had changed its totem from the crocodile to the baboon. Its line of chiefs begins with one Maele, but the descent

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from him is rather obscure as there are in this one tribe at least three distinct lines of chieftains. The chief who reigned over the Bahurutshe at the time of the separation was probably Mohurutshe the second, for the Batlharo reckon his son, Motlhware, as the first of their chiefs after they became a separate tribe.

The cause of the separation is said to have been the misconduct of the young men of the cattle post at Motlhwareng (wild olive tree), which is still standing in the country of the Bahurutshe. It was a time of scarcity, and the wives of the uncles of the young men had been sent to the posts that they might be nourished by the milk of the herds that were located there. When the elders of the tribe visited the post to see how the cattle were getting on they noticed signs which indicated misconduct between the young men and the women. After a council had been held it was decided to put the young men to death. But Mohurutshe, the chief, refused to have the sentence carried out. Shortly afterwards, however, Motlhware, the younger son of Mohurutshe, gathered together the young men and maidens of his own age and formed the tribe which was called by his name, the people of Motlhware. Some say the name was given to them because of the incident at the cattle post called Motlhwareng, while others affirm, and I think with greater reason, that the name was self-given, as the followers of Motlhware.

The newly formed tribe made for the Molopo



A NATIVE CHIEF IN HIS BACKYARD.

In the background is a large *sefala*, or granary. This is built of clay and elevated on pillars above the ground. The Bakhatala may not sell their grain without the permission of their Chief.





river and marched along its banks, preceded by one of the leaders named Notwane, who spied out the land for them. They travelled down the river, skirting the Kalahari, till they reached the junction of the Molopo and Moshaweng rivers, making several settlements, and at each stopping-place their descendants are to be found to-day—some north of the Molopo and others between that river and the Langberg hills. They got as far south as Daniel's Kuil and Campbell, always preceded by Notwane, who, when he found a suitable place, went back for the rest of the band. At Daniel's Kuil they found elephants, which they killed, and called the place Tlhaka-loa-tlou, or elephant's tusk. Leaving Daniel's Kuil they moved on to the edge of the Kaab plateau overlooking the village of Campbell. In the distance they saw the Vaal river with willow trees on its banks. Creeping up to the village at night Notwane and his little band of voortrekkers heard the people speaking their own tongue, but not knowing who they were, and not being strong enough to attack, they returned northwards again without making their presence known. These people at Campbell were probably some of the Batlhaping of Phuduhuchwane.

Some offshoots of the tribe had gone deep into the desert, and at Lehututu met some Bakwena who had fled from the impis of Moselekatse. They even went as far north as Ghanzi, in what is now known as Ngamiland. They were at constant feud with other sections of the Bechuana race, warring with the

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Bakwena over the Bakalahari people, or Batlhaopa, as they were sometimes called, and with the Batlhaping who lived along the banks of the Kuruman river, driving them out of their villages and occupying their territory. Moreover, they crossed to the Langberg and built several villages at the foot of the hills and at a fountain between the mountain and the river. All the country to the north-west of what is known as British Bechuanaland from Oliphant's Hoek in the Langberg range to Khuis and Maubelwe on and beyond the Molopo eventually became their pasture and hunting grounds, with extensions into the heart of the desert as far as Lehututu and Ghanzi. Although, as we have learnt, the Batlharo were constantly fighting with the Bakwena and Batlhaping, they lived on very friendly terms with the Barolong, and in many places shared with them the occupation of the land and the rule in a town.

When the Griqua war broke out in 1878 some of the Batlharo tribe joined in the rebellion, but the chief of the Langberg section, Makgolokwe, refused to share in it. Morwe, the reigning chief of the Batlharo on the Kuruman river, however, took the warpath and marched on the mission station at Kuruman, to which many of the Europeans in the country had gone for refuge. On the approach of the Europeans under General Sir Charles Warren they retired on Gamopedi, where a fight took place and the tribe was badly defeated. Later all their country south of the Molopo became part of the

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Crown Colony, and with the rest was annexed to the Cape in 1895. In 1897 the Batlharo living on the Moshaweng river, together with those at Gamopedi on the Kuruman river and some of the followers of Totwe in the Langberg, joined in the rising caused by Galeshiwe of Phokwane. After some months of unrest and several engagements they were defeated; the land in the Langberg was confiscated and parcelled out as farms to Europeans. The town of Gamopedi, twice the battlefield between European troops and natives, was also confiscated and, together with its pasture and arable lands, was made a settlement of loyal Batlharo, who had not only taken no part in the rising of their fellow-tribesmen, but had assisted the Government in many ways.

## CHAPTER XXI

### The Bechuana of the Northern Area (Bechuanaland Protectorate)

#### *The Bakwena.*

**I**N recording the history of the tribes that have sprung from the stock of which the Bahurutshe is the leading stem, pride of place must be given to the Bakwena, the oldest branch of the tribes living in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Their territory lies between that of the Bangwaketse in the south and the Bamangwato in the north, and reaches from the Transvaal border well into the Kalahari desert. The traditions of the Bakwena take us back to the time when, as a nomadic race, the original stock, now broken into so many divisions, roamed between what is now Basutoland and the Zambezi; in fact, they go back to the time before the ancestors of the race crossed that river. As a united body they travelled south as far as the Modder river, where several branches seemed to settle, the remnants of which afterwards were gathered together into the Basuto nation. The main body turned northward and eventually made a home at Rathateng between the Limpopo and Madikwe rivers.

The Bakwena claim that the cave from which their ancestor Looe came is to be found in their country between Mochudi and Molepolole, because there is to be seen there the large flat stone with a cistern in it, and on the stone imprints of the feet of people and the hoofs and paws of animals of various kinds. Here, too, are to be found hollows in the stone like unto water-pots, and the place itself is called "The water-pots of the maidens." Near to it is a pool called "the maiden's pool." A large footprint is there, said to be the print of Matsieng's foot made when he came forth from, or returned to, the cave.

The Bakwena line of chiefs goes back beyond Masilo to one Motona, who is said to have been the ancestor of Masilo. Motona had a son, Phokotsea or Phokotsie, but whether Motona was the grandfather of Masilo or some remote ancestor it is impossible to decide to-day. At any rate, the Bakwena did not begin as a separate tribe till after the death of Masilo, whose son (or grandson), Kwena, hived off from the Bahurutshe when Mohurutshe became chief. As we have already seen, Kwena, the chief from whom they derived their name, is claimed by them to have been the elder brother of Malope, and neither his younger brother nor son, as some maintain. Be that as it may, their real history only begins with the reign of Kgabo (a flame of fire) who was the grandson of Kwena. At the time of his birth, and while his mother was still secluded in her hut, according to the custom of the tribe, a band of raiders said to have

been Mashona, fell upon the town. The town was burnt, but, learning that the wife of the chief was lying with her recently born baby in the house with bushes at the entrance indicating that a secluded person lay inside, the raiders not only spared the hut and the lives of the inhabitants, but set apart some milk-goats for the sustenance of the child of the chief whose herds they had looted. Because of this he was named Kgabo, or, as it is sometimes said to mean, "the light of us Matabele or Mashona." The child grew into manhood and named his first-born son Tebele in gratitude for the kindness shown to him and his mother by the raiders. At this time the followers of Ngwato and Ngwaketse, the brothers of Mohurutshe, were living with the Bakwena at Mochudi and continued to do so until the reign of Mocwasele the first, in more or less concord.

The first real rupture took place over a marriage, but probably the three sections had for some time been showing signs of independent action, as the Bangwaketse had hived off. The cause of the rupture was the action of the Bamangwato in cheating Mocwasele in the matter of his wife, and the treatment meted out to his wives on a subsequent occasion. The story is that Mocwasele loved Kgapho, the daughter of Moleta, one of the Bamangwato section. He sought her in marriage and apparently the usual bridal price having been accepted by the Bamangwato, Mocwasele sent his friends to bring his wife home. But the Bamangwato did not wish to let him have

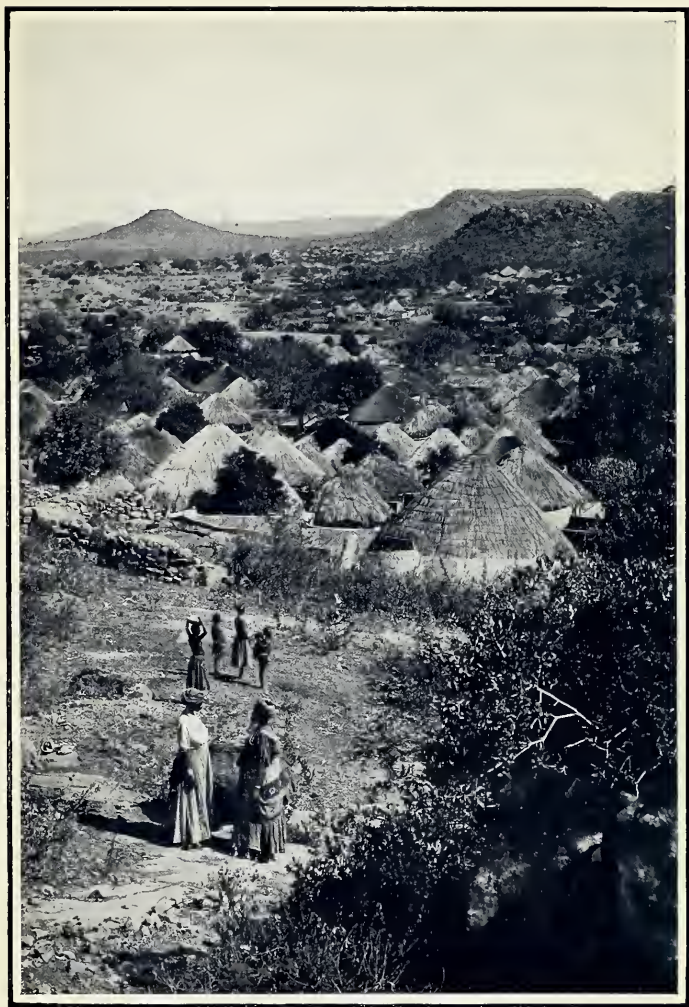
Kgapho, so they arrayed another girl, Moitsatshimane, daughter of Chweu, with the kidney fat of the slaughtered bullock, which was the sign of marriage, the fat being placed over the shoulders of the bride. In the meanwhile Kgapho had been given as wife to one Moongwe, but her heart was given to Mocwasele, and so in the course of time she left her husband and fled to Mocwasele to become his wife.

After this event, while both women were at the Bakwena headquarters, the time for the puberty rites of the maidens arrived, and both wives went to the headquarters of their branch of the tribe to take part in the ceremony for their younger sisters. Now, Moongwe, the deserted husband of Kgapho, being filled with grief at the desertion of his wife, sounded an alarm and falsely asserted that the Bakwena were raiding the cattle. The Bamangwato went out in a crowd to the hill called Ngwaritse, took the wives of Mocwasele, and at the instigation of Moongwe, stripped them and sent them back to their husband naked. They fled, but, filled with shame, took shelter in the gardens where the cattle were feeding on the stalks of the reaped corn. They sent the herds of the cattle to Mocwasele with the news of their plight. When Mocwasele realized the insult he prepared for war. He got the assistance of Khutwe, chief of the Bangwaketse and his son Mongale, and together the two armies set out to attack their kindred, the Bangwaketse, saying that there was no need for them to be given their place in the battle, as according to custom

they were the bodyguard of the chief, being his uncle's followers. Mocwasele attacked the town and scattered the people, before ever the Bangwaketse had entered upon the fight. The latter arrived in time to see the conquerors coming forth with new ornamented skirts, and they knew that the Bamangwato had been defeated. The Bakwena looted everything they could lay their hands on. The Bamangwato with their chief Mathibi fled to the north and took up their abode in the hills of Leshosho, better known to-day as Shoshong. This battle might well be called "The battle of the skirts."

The more or less reliable history of the Bakwena, as distinguished from mere tradition, begins with the reign of Mocwasele the Second, who was probably the grandson of Seitlhamo, who reigned about the middle of the eighteenth century. This Mocwasele was the reigning chief during the years of the raids by the Makololo and Mantatees in the third decade of last century. Up to the time of his reign his people had not come into contact either with Europeans or representatives of any other Bantu people, apart from the Basuto who were, of course, of their own kin. Now Mocwasele was a great traveller, and in his wanderings came into touch with Europeans, and it was from him that the Bakwena learnt of the white race. He brought back with him various of the European utensils which he used, and because of this was called by his people the god of the household. To the Bakwena mugs and dishes were wonderful





A VIEW OF MOCHUDI.

This shows only a small part of one of the largest towns of the Bechuana.



things, unknown to any, the very use of them being unknown, and when they saw their chief with lots of foreign vessels they felt that no surname would be suitable but that given.

Mocwasele was a tyrant who ruled his people harshly. He is said to have made eunuchs of several of his people and robbed them of their wives and cattle, and his customary punishment for any fault was death. The tribe rose against him and he was put to death by his brother, Morwakgomo, at Shokwane before Moselekatse raided the land and scattered the people. But the Bakwena do not admit that they were conquered either by the Makololo of Sebitwane or the Matabele of Moselekatse, but there is no doubt that they fled before the latter and were impoverished by the raids of both. There is a legend that when Mocwasele saw he was about to be killed by his people he said to them: "I see you will murder me, but the ants of my fathers will come and kill you." This is said to-day to be a prophecy of the coming of Sebitwane with the Makololo hordes who came after his death, scattered the tribe and stripped them of their herds.

In 1808 two Europeans passed through the land. They disappeared, and the story is that they were drowned in the Limpopo river at Oude. The rain doctors asserted that their wagons would destroy the rain and so at their instructions they were cast into the river, but the horses were eaten by the people. There is reason, however, to fear that their death was not so accidental as reported, and it is more than

probable that the sight of so much wealth aroused the cupidity of the people, and the fall into the river was aided, perhaps engineered, by the chief.

About this time the people, weakened by internal strife and external raids, scattered. Some went with Legwale, brother of Mocwasele, to the Marico river in the Transvaal and settled down for a time near to Zeerust; others followed Molesa to Lophephe. Mocwasele left two young sons, Sechele and Kgosi-dintsi. During the raid of the Makololo the young lad, Sechele, was made a prisoner and kept by them in captivity. His own people had neither the power to free him nor the means to ransom him, but the Bamangwato who, though they had separated from the Bakwena, still looked upon them as their elder brothers, recognized their duty and purchased his freedom by the payment of a large quantity of beads and other things valued by the Makololo. At this time Kgare was chief of the Bamangwato. He took Sechele and his mother to his home, and so Sechele grew up among the Bamangwato. When he was old enough he wished to assume his duties as chief of the Bakwena, who were, at that time, living at Lophephe, but Molesa refused to assist him or even to acknowledge him as chief. Then Sechele went to the Bahurutshe to Chief Moilwa, whither he was followed by another of his uncles, Senese, who brought him back to Lophephe, from which place Molesa fled, leaving the government in Sechele's hands.

At Lophephe he began his reign and there he

initiated his brother Kgosidintsi into the franchisement of the tribe by the puberty rite. It was shortly after this that Moselekatse attacked the Bakwena and Sechele's mother was killed. The tribe then moved to Chonwane, where they were found by Dr. Livingstone. By this time Sechele had gathered together the scattered members of his tribe and he had become chief of a fairly large and powerful tribe. But the land where they lived was barren. It yielded no crops, it was dry and unfruitful, so, on the advice of Livingstone, Sechele moved, with his tribe, to Kolobeng where there was a stream of that name, and where they could get arable land as well as pasture.

In 1852 strife arose between the Bakgatlha tribe and the Transvaal Boers, who had moved their forces against them. The Bakgatlha fled to Sechele, and the Boers following them, an engagement took place at Kolobeng in which about sixty Bakwena lost their lives. The Boers also captured Balerile, one of Sechele's wives, and her two children, but the chief's wife and her children had been sent to Kuruman to be under the protection of Robert Moffat, the well-known missionary. Sechele's son Kgare remained a prisoner among the Boers for a long time, but eventually he was allowed to return home. Sechele determined to go to England to lay his grievance before Queen Victoria, but, arriving at the Cape, he found the difficulties too great and so turned back to his home. After being driven out of Kolobeng the tribe settled for a time at Dittheyane, but eventually settled down

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at Molepolole, where they reside to this day. There this old chief lived and ruled, convinced of the truths of the teaching of his friend, Livingstone, and yet held tightly in the grip of heathenism, wanting to be free from the fear and power of witchcraft yet captive to its fearsomeness.

In 1885 he, together with Khama, chief of the Bamangwato, Bathoeng, chief of the Bangwaketse, and Lencwe, chief of the Bakgatlha, entered into a covenant with the British Government, under the terms of which the latter agreed to form a Protectorate over their lands, while the native tribes agreed to give tribute in the form of taxes for the carrying out of the protection. The value of this protection was seen in 1886 when the Bakwena and the Bamangwato disagreed as to the ownership of land round Lophephe, but it was not the pasture lands about which they quarrelled so much as the wells whose waters their cattle jointly drank. Lophephe was the undelimited boundary between the two tribes, and until this quarrel arose the herds of both tribes fed together and drank together, although the cattle posts of the Bamangwato were on the north and those of the Bakwena on the south of the wells. In olden days the quarrel would have been settled by the young men of the posts by the spear, and they wanted to settle it in the old way then. But when the missionary residing among the Bakwena heard of preparations for war and knew that already the Bakwena army was taking the field, he besought the intervention of the

local representative of the British Government. The missionary living with the Bamangwato was equally anxious that the trouble should be settled amicably. The British Government agreed that if the chiefs would agree it would send an arbitrator. At the disputed wells the Bakwena and Bamangwato, with their leaders and missionaries met, and Major Goold Adams went as arbitrator. After hearing both sides he told them it was plain that the wells had been the common property of both tribes, and decided that they should be divided, those in the south going to the Bakwena, while those in the north should belong to the Bamangwato. This meeting with the approval of all, stones were gathered and beacons erected, showing the boundary between the two tribes. Then arose a mighty shout at the decision which had made peace between the children of a common ancestor.

In 1893 the old chief Sechele burdened with years, but who had lived to see arbitration instead of war settling tribal disputes, died. He was succeeded by his son, Sebele, and he, in turn by his son, Kealeboga, who took the name of Sechele the Second. But in less than thirty years the three passed away and a young chief, Sebele (II) occupies the chieftain's chair. None of the Bechuana tribes has had more internal strifes than the Bakwena, and no chief tasted so bitterly of the spirit and fruit of warfare than old Sechele. Throughout their history they have never changed their totem, the totem which probably their ancestors brought with them when they left

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the land of high mountains and big waters, but their name Bakwena is not derived from the *kwena* (crocodile) which is their totem, but from Kwena their first chief as an independent tribe.

### *The Bamangwato.*

The Bamangwato date their history as a separate clan from the time when Ngwato, the second son of Malope, separated from the parent stem and went with his uncle Kwena to form a new tribe, but their history as a separate tribe begins when Mathibi of the house of Ngwato fled from the Bakwena after the battle of the skirts at Ngwaritse, or Kgope as it was afterwards called, and migrated to Lebati, moving later to Marutlwe, and finally settled at Shoshong. At this time they had with them the tribe of the Baphaleng. At Shoshong they found the Bakaa already in possession of the hill country, but these they drove out and took possession of the country. So far as can be computed this must have been about the end of the seventeenth or early in the eighteenth century. The Bamangwato maintain that up to the time of the battle referred to as "The battle of the skirts" the Bangwaketse were still under the rule of the elder branch of the tribe and acknowledged Mathibi as their chief, but there is much confusion in the stories of the two tribes as to whether the Bangwaketse had not already hived off before that battle took place.

At the time of the separation Mathibi had two sons,



Kgama (hartebeest) and Tauana (little lion). Both sons became heads of tribes, for shortly after they had settled at Shoshong, Mathibi with his younger son and the followers of the latter separated from the tribe at Motse-o-dule (the town has gone out) and went to the Botletle river. Kgama followed on their track and at Khidia gave battle to his brother and his forces. Old Mathibi then wished to return with Kgama to Shoshong, but he refused to have him, saying, "No, you have already rejected me. Your son is Tauana." After the battle Tauana and his people pressed farther into the wilds and eventually made their home near to Lake Ngami; and thus became the tribe of Batauana.

But while the ranks of the Bamangwato were depleted by the hiving off of a section of the tribe they were strengthened by many additions, for they found many other tribes besides the Bakaa and Baphaleng living in the district they now looked upon as their own, and these they absorbed either by subjection after battle or by agreement, so that to-day the people known as the Bamangwato are a composite made up of many tribes, the leading being the Baphuti (people of the duiker) or Bamangwato proper. Each of these tribes, or perhaps we should call them clans, has its distinctive totem. The tribes amalgamated with the Bamangwato are the Batalaota, said to be of Mashona origin, the Baphaleng, subdued at Shoshong, the Bakaa, who separated from the Barolong in the seventeenth century, the Bapedi who dwell in the

hills at Chwapong, the Bakhurutshe of Bechuana origin, and a number of alien tribes such as the Makalaka, the Makoba, the Makgalagadi, the Mashubea and Bushmen. Several of these tribes had come to them for protection from the Matabele hordes of Moselekatse.

For many years the Bamangwato roamed about before finally settling at Shoshong. At one time they lived at Makgarekgare, where they were followed by the Basuto forces of Sebitwane and others of the Mantatees peoples ; but the Bamangwato turned to the river and the Saltpans. The larger force of Mantatees with Sebitwane did not follow them up, but turning towards the Lake passed on to the Zambezi. The rest of the raiding hordes, led by one Sephiphi, harried Kgama's people at the Makgarekgare lagoon, but they, too, eventually made their way to the Zambezi. At this time the Batlhokwa, who had been part of the united tribe, rebelled and formed a clan of their own under Leshage. They raided the herds of the Bamangwato, but the latter took back the cattle by force, defeated the rebels in battle and drove them away to the south.

The hero chief of the Bamangwato was Kgare the First, the well-beloved of his people. He is spoken of as a brave and wise chief and very tender-hearted towards all unfortunates. It was during his reign that the tribe grew in numbers and power. He seems to have been very fond of war and cattle-raiding. He brought into subjection to his rule many of the smaller



A HUGE GRAIN BASKET.

This is the way in which the Bakalahari store their grain. The basket is protected by a roughly-thatched roof.



A COURT JESTER.

at the Jubilee Festival of Chief Khama, July, 1922.



tribes who lived south of the Zambezi. On one of his raiding expeditions he came to the Matopo hills and learnt that ahead of their camp were some of the Mashona people who were the possessors of much corn. On hearing this the hot-heads of the party wished to attack at once, but the majority advised that they should await the arrival of the rest of their party. To this advice the zealots answered, "Nay, if we delay we shall be depriving ourselves of food, and we are not only hungry but famishing in sight of plenty." However, the majority decided for delay, but one of the party, Taueyele (the lion has eaten) scornfully said, "If you agree to this advice it is because you are afraid to fight." To this the fiery youths replied, "All right, let us attack though we shall be going to our death, as we are so few."

The Bamangwato set out, but not unobserved by the Mashona, who were aware of their presence in the hills. They knew that the only approach to their town lay through a defile in the hills, and so they arranged their forces by night, placing their main body of troops at the foot of the defile, with instructions to allow the Bamangwato to pass them, and even to attack the town. Not succeeding in their attack the Bamangwato tried to get out of the defile, but found the mouth held by a Mashona force. A fierce engagement took place, the Bamangwato were badly beaten, their forces scattered, and their brave chief fell in the fray. The memory of this brave chief is held in reverence to this day, and no greater honour

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can be given his descendants than to speak of them as such.

After the death of Kgare the remnant returned to their homes, and for a time the tribe was divided. Some went to the Victoria Falls on the Zambezi, others went southward to their various towns in the old district. The Baphaleng and the Bakaa returned to Shoshong. Now that the Bamangwato were without a chief, since the children of Kgare were too young to rule, the government was divided between his younger brothers. Kgare's eldest sons were Sekgome and Kgama, but neither was a son of the chief wife, who was sonless on the death of the chief, but after some years the widow gave birth to a son and according to the custom of the tribe this lad, though no blood relation of Kgare, was recognized as one begotten for his name, and hence the rightful heir to the chieftainship. As neither Sekgome nor Kgama were of the chief house their uncle, Sedimo, gave the chieftainship to Kgama, and the tribe split into two once again. All Kgare's brothers met with violent deaths, Sedimo and another being killed by lions. Sekgome was left with a section of the tribe, but on the death of Kgama, who only ruled for about five years, the tribe became reunited under his rule. During his reign the Bakwena tribe, under Kgosidintsi came and resided for a time with them, and later went on to Lophephe, where they lived side by side with the Bamangwato.

The son born to Kgare's widow, named Macheng,

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was captured, when yet a child, by Moselekatse, who took him away to Matabeleland. There he was found by Moffat the missionary, who persuaded Moselekatse to set him free. On receiving his freedom he asserted his rights as legal chief, and Sekgome, with his sons, one of whom, Khama, became the best known and most respected of all the Bechuanaland chiefs, fled to Sechele, the chief of the Bakwena, who, remembering the kindness shown to him by Kgare, received the refugees kindly and treated them hospitably. Meanwhile Macheng, used to arbitrary actions and the tyrannical rule of Moselekatse, tried to rule the Bechuana in the same way. But the system of government among the Bechuana is not quite an undisputed despotism, but rather a patriarchy, for the chief has to listen to the advice of his councillors, and so Macheng soon had the tribe roused to rebellion. They recalled Sekgome and his sons, one of whom, Khama, Macheng had never wanted to leave the tribe. Khama and Macheng were nearly of the same age, but Khama refused to stay and determined to cast in his lot with his father. On the return of Sekgome, Macheng was the fugitive and he also fled for refuge to Sechele, and he, in turn, was warmly received.

It was while Sekgome and his sons were at Molepolole, Sekgome's town, that they came into closer contact with Christianity, although Livingstone had visited the tribe at Shoshong in 1842. For a while after Sekgome's return to Shoshong all went well.

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His brother, Macheng, had not been *persona grata* to the tribe, and the chief, who was a remarkable man with a capacity for rule, and fearless in the extreme, had it all his own way. He was not merely chief of the tribe, but head of the medicine-men, and in both capacities was an alert and strenuous supporter of all the ancient customs and rites of the people, and a persistent opponent of every innovation. With Christianity he would have nothing to do. He opposed it with all the force of his chieftainship and all the fearsomeness of his magic. The first clash came when he tried to coerce his sons, both of whom had embraced the Christian religion, to take part in tribal ceremonies, which their consciences, enlightened by Christianity, would not permit them to do. When the time for the male puberty rites arrived Sekgome had no son to act the part a father wishes his sons to take and initiate the raw youths into the functions and privileges of manhood. At first he tried coercion, but that failing he tried to persuade them, but without success. Then began a struggle between the indomitable wills of father and eldest son—the younger brother was not such a steadfast character—which lasted till the death of the old chief. This was in 1865 and the feud lasted with great fierceness till 1872.

When Sekgome found he could neither persuade nor coerce his sons he tried to kill them and all who in any way befriended them; but none of his people could be induced to lay violent hands upon them. He himself took a gun to fire on his son, but it was



snatched out of his hands. Then he attempted to destroy them by the power of witchcraft. This had no effect, but eventually the two sons and their followers had to take refuge in the hills. In the course of time a peace was made, but the heart of the old chief had not changed. He had tried assassination, witchcraft and war to rid him of the son, whose indomitable will was as strong as his own, so the wily old chief determined to recall Macheng that he might take his place and so prevent his son, Khama, from succeeding to the chieftainship ; but, first, by an act of treachery, he had his old friend, Chukudu, father-in-law of Khama, who had fled to Sechele, murdered. Macheng returned but publicly repudiated any intention of helping Sekgome by the murder of his sons. He became chief, and once again changed places with Sekgome, who went to live at Sechele's town. The tribe, however, soon tired of Macheng's rule, and in 1872 placed Khama in his stead. Sekgome, recalled by his son, was again nominally chief, but the chieftainship was really in the hands of Khama.

Khama's reign began in 1872 and lasted till February, 1923. His life was a stormy one from birth to death. Born somewhat round about the beginning of the third decade of the last century he was at least ninety at the time of his death. At the time of his birth his mother was a fugitive from one or other of the raiding hordes of Basuto and Zulus, both of which are spoken of as Matabele by the Bechuana people. He lived to be the one chief who so defeated the fierce impis of

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Moselekatse that they never again offered him battle. He had trouble too, with his brothers, one of whom, Khamane, tried to steal the kingdom from him. Later on his troubles were increased by the Boers of the Transvaal, but these troubles as well as his contests with the Chartered Company, were settled by arbitration. In 1885 he had joined with the other chiefs in accepting the Protectorate of the British Government, and he and his people have ever since been loyal vassals of the British Crown. Under his rule his people progressed. He began his reign by the prohibition of all intoxicating liquors; he abolished heathen customs and gave a modified form of individual right to property. He held his Jubilee in 1922, and there attended, to bear testimony to his sterling character and wise government, representatives of the British Government, the London Missionary Society and the local Chamber of Commerce. His history is merged in that of Britain's sphere of influence in South Africa. He died in 1923 and is succeeded by his son, Sekgome, from whom he was estranged for over twenty years, but who made his peace with his aged father before he died.

### *The Batawana.*

As we have already learnt, shortly after the separation of the Bamangwato from the Bakwena there was a further split within the tribe and the chief, Mathibi, with his younger son and their followers, formed a new

tribe, which has been called ever since the Batauana, after Tauana the young chief. The story of their separation and the battle that followed at Khidia has been told in the history of the Bamangwato. After the battle the Batuana, or Western Bamangwato as they are sometimes called, made their way along the Botletle or Zouga river, where they came into contact with other Bechuana who were called Bakhurutshe and other people of a different race and speech called Makoba. Turning from the river the tribe made for the Kgwebe hills, about seventy miles from the big water, called Nghabe, but which is known to-day as Lake Ngami. Here they found some ancient wells, made by a people unknown to them or to the nomads of the desert, which they cleaned out and found a good supply of water. Here for a time they made their home, finding good hunting ground on all sides. Elephants, rhinoceroses, giraffes and buffaloes, together with all manner of deer, abounded on the plains, and hippopotami, with fish of various kinds, were to be found in the river and lake. They found that the Bushman name for the lake meant Giraffes, and when Livingstone discovered it in 1851 he gave it the Sechuana form of Nghabe and called it Ngami. In the Kgwebe hills the tribe stayed for many years, moving from there to Nakalacwe and in much later years to Tsau on the Okovango river. A few years ago they left Tsau and now have their chief town at Maung on the Tamalakane river, which is a tributary of the Botletle or Zouga.

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Mathibi, as we have seen, wanted to return to his son, Kgama, after the battle of Khidia, but reconciliation was refused by the latter. The old chief does not seem to have had a happy life with his younger and favourite son at the Kgwebe hills. He showed his father no respect, and after a time drove him away. The old man then tried once more to be reconciled to his elder son, but again was refused with the word, "Nay, your son is Tauana, it is not right for you to come and live with a mere servant, but if the chief wishes to live in his own country let him chose a fountain and live at it." Driven away by the son he had favoured, rejected by the son he had treated badly, Mathibi's heart died within him and he committed suicide. One version of his death is that he died by poison, self-administered ; another, that he went into a defile in the hills and hanged himself on a tree. Whichever version is true there is no doubt in the minds of the people that he died by his own hand.

The Batauana were subject to raids both from the Makololo under Sebitwane and the Matabele of Moselekatse. When, in later years, the Makololo power was weakening and many deserted the descendant of Sebitwane, Lecholathebe, the grandson of Tauana, received them and treated them well, but when the power was completely broken by the rising of the Barotse, whom they had subdued and enslaved, Lecholathebe, by an act of treachery, induced the fugitive Makololo to take refuge with him. They did so, and he put all the male members

of the refugees to death. But while the raids of the Makololo had ceased by the middle of the last century the Matabele continued to trouble the Batwana up to 1885, when they were completely baffled in their efforts as the Batauana took to the reeds, which grew thick and high on the banks of the rivers, and to the islands where the raiders could not reach them. At the Okovango they had to turn back to Lobengula, their lord, with little spoil and no credit. Many of the Matabele warriors fell to the spears and rifles of the assailed, as they attempted with their usual disregard of life to cross the river. But though the attack failed the fierce hordes of Matabele played great havoc with the Batauana stock and cruelly treated the women and children who fell into their hands before they were finally driven away. When their impi reached the lake they inflicted acts of terrible cruelty on women and children, and where they could inflict injury on persons and destroy property they did so. In the first of the two last raids they came upon the Batauana unprepared, but notwithstanding three brave attacks they failed to take the position. But though the Batauana were able to repel the attacks and even to drive off the enemy they were not able to follow up their advantage and inflict such a crushing defeat upon the Matabele as to prevent their return. The Matabele retired, but only to sweep the surrounding country and make prisoners of helpless slaves.

In the following year the Matabele returned with

an army of selected warriors captained by Lobengula's own brother. They drove along with them a large troop of cattle as food for the road. But this time they found the Batauana prepared, for as the Matabele did not hurry themselves, thinking their task would be an easy one owing to the size and quality of the impi, they gave time to Moremi's men to take up a strong position. Moremi was the son of Lecholathebe, and as his father was dead he was now the reigning chief. The Batauana abandoned the town which they knew they could not defend, and took up a position three days' journey up the river, but the Matabele did not hurry. Finding some food which the Batauana had left in the town they sat down, and, taking their ease, ate it up before they moved to what they considered would be the complete destruction of the Batauana tribe. They took nine days before they attacked, but at last they launched their forces on the Batauana, who had crossed the river on a raft made of reeds and river weeds, and taking up their position on the islands. The Matabele leader riding amidst the impi addressed the warriors, now eager to wet their spears in the blood of the Batauana. They rushed to the attack and, led by their captain, the hitherto unconquered army boldly entered the river and made for the reeds where the hidden Batauana awaited them armed, not with assegais which could only be used at close quarters, nor with bows and arrows, but with weapons of precision, with breach-loading rifles which they had learnt

to use, but which were still strange to the Matabele. In vain did the attackers try to get to hand-to-hand fighting. Their leader was the first to fall, and at last, utterly panic-stricken they rushed back to the river and tried to cross by the frail floating bridge on which the Batauana had reached the island, but the bridge gave way and many were drowned—more perhaps than those who fell by the bullet. The tables were now turned and the Batauana became the pursuers. Once a band of horsemen, too eager to be cautious, were almost surrounded by the fleeing Matabele, but they extricated themselves and punished the fleeing impi. It was a complete defeat, the severity of which might be computed by the many mounds along the river where they had buried their dead. It was the beginning of the decline of the Matabele warrior nation, for never again did they attack with success any tribe with war-like spirit.

Moremi did not live to reach middle age. He left behind him a son too young to rule, so his brother, Sekgome, became regent. For a time he ruled well, but the hearts of many of the tribe turned towards their young chief, Mathibi, who had the advantage of having had an English education. Sekgome, however, stuck to the chieftainship till he was removed by the British administration, the suzerain of the country. The tribe broke up, a large section hiving off with Sekgome, who has made his home on the Zambezi, leaving Mathibi the country and the remainder of the people.

*The Bangwaketse.*

The Bangwaketse are the third of the tribes that separated from the original followers of Masilo. Ngwaketse, their leader, after whom they were named, had gone forth with his elder brother, Ngwato, and uncle, Kwena, when they separated from the other branch of the family. Although it may be disputed as to whether Kwena, their uncle, or Malope, their father, was the elder son of Masilo, there is no doubt as to the position given to the Bahurutshe as representatives of the eldest branch of the family. The Bangwaketse were probably the first to break away from the newly formed tribe under Kwena, and the separation was evidently a friendly one. It took place while they were living together at Phuthadikobo or Mochudi. Their first move was to Potsane, but they did not stay there, for after a while they made their home at Senona and again moved on to Sheoke, where they must have lived for some time, as three chiefs are mentioned as having ruled while they resided at that place. The first was Makabe the First, who lived to old age. He was succeeded by his son, Mongale, who was killed in battle during a civil war within the tribe, and he was succeeded by his son, Molete. During the reign of Molete the tribe began another of its nomadic wanderings. They moved from Sheoke and settled at the hill Pitsa, near to Lobatsi, from where they moved to Molongatwana. Then they turned their faces southwards to the Molopo river



and made a home for a while at Mohakane, near to Mabule. From there they migrated to Setlabetsane, and there at a very advanced age Molete died. At the hour of his death he was sitting in the *kgotla* or place of tribal assembly. He rose to his feet and attempted to go to the cattle fold, but his strength gave way and he fell dead with his face turned towards his cattle. So unusual was it for chiefs to die of old age that these two Makabe (I) and Molete are remarked upon by the tribe to this day as dying of old age *only*.

After the death of Molete, his son, Makabe (II), came to the chieftainship. He seems to have been a brave, bold and successful leader of his people. Stormy as the reigns of the other chiefs had been, this chief seems to have had the stormiest of all. He did not remain at Setlabetsane but moved to Sebatleng, and after a short time left there and made his home on the hill at Kanye. While living at Kanye the tribe was attacked by two hordes from the south, both being connections of the Basuto tribes. In their defence the Bangwaketse were assisted by several of the other Bechuana tribes and were able to drive the enemy off. On the hill Makabe had stone walls built to assist him in the defence of his town. After this attack they left the hill and moved down to Pitsana, but they only stayed there a short time, migrating once more, and coming to Mokatanane. Moving again, they came to the olive tree called Kanya-oa-Marapalalwe, from whence they moved again to the

hill-top. While there they were once more attacked by a body of southern tribes travelling with their families and goods. These were probably the Mantatees under Sebitwane. They fought desperately and eventually drove them off, turning them back to the south, where they were again defeated by the Griquas and Batlhaping on the plains near to Dithakong.

The next move of this wandering tribe of Bama-gwato was to Segeng, whence they migrated in a short time to Kgwakgwa, where they were living when Robert Moffat visited them in 1824. Peace, of a kind, had no sooner returned to them than they were attacked again, but this time by a force that had swept the Transvaal like a devouring fire, leaving devastation and ruin in its wake. It was the fierce Matabele, cruel, relentless and pitiless, sparing neither warrior nor non-combatant, old or young. The fear of the Matabele preceded them on their devastating march, and Makabe, fearing the result of the battle, sent off into the desert his herds of cattle and the women and children of the tribe. He also solicited the help of the Bakwena, whose chief, Mocwasele (I) had been helped in the "Battle of the Skirts" by their ancestors. The Bakwena came, but not to help. They pretended to be lying in wait to fall on the rear of the Matabele, but what they were really doing was to sit on the fence and await the decision of the battle, that they might throw in their lot with the winning force and so come in for a share of the spoils. The brave Makabe, fighting strenuously and rallying his warriors around

him, seemed at one time as if again he would succeed in driving away his foes, but the strategy of the Matabele won, for, feigning a retreat, they induced the Bamangwato to open their ranks in pursuit, with the result that they were defeated and their brave chief fell at the head of his men, and the victory went to the invaders. Now was the opportunity of the Bakwena. They fraternized with the Matabele and aided them in their search for the hidden cattle. They gained little, as the cattle had been carefully hidden away in the arid parts of the Kalahari. Sebegwe, the brother of Makabe, had fled to Dutlwe, whither the Matabele followed. Again was there a fight in which both sides suffered severely, but the honours were on the side of the fugitives, for surprising a number of the enemy seeking water at the wells at Dutlwe, Sebegwe fell upon them and destroyed them. The struggle between the Matabele and the Bangwaketse lasted for some time, and was really only brought to an end when a Griqua force under Jan Bloem drove Moselekatse and his impis from the country.

With the fall of Makabe the Bangwaketse fell on evil times. Makabe's eldest son, Chose, had fallen out with his father over their cattle and had fled to the Barolong, who were living at that time at Khunwana. Makabe's warriors took the field and attacked the Barolong, and it is said that Chose fell in the fight. But another version of his death is that he was induced by the Bangwaketse, who had followed after him, to

return with them to his father, and while he was doing this they murdered him. Chose left two sons, both very young at the time of their father's death. At a later date an attempt was made on the lives of these lads, who were poisoned by thick milk which had been medicated for the purpose. The younger lad drank voraciously, but the elder only sparingly, with the result that the younger died, but the elder survived to become the chief of his tribe.

Makabe was succeeded by his brother, Sebegwe. He was a cruel and vindictive chief, and was probably the instigator of the attempt to poison the heir. He treated his people cruelly and many suffered death by his decree. At his death, or probably before it, Gaseitsiwe began to assert his power. He made attempts to oust his uncle from the "stool of the chief," and the tribe became divided. At his death, however, Sebegwe was still ruling. Then the tribe broke up into two followings, one section going with Senthuhe, the heir of Sebegwe; the other with Gaseitsiwe, the hereditary chief. In the end Gaseitsiwe drew Senthuhe's people to himself, and the two sections came together once more, and made their home in Kanye, where Senthuhe died. This took place about 1853, at which time Gaseitsiwe was about forty years old, and up to this time the tribe had become strong but grown weak again through civil strife and wars forced upon them by other tribes. Had there been any binding force among them they might have united and, led by a chief of the mettle of

Makaba, have successfully fought against the various raiding bands from the south and east. But the fatal lack of trust of the tribes in each other, and the inability to hold together, which gave them the name of Bechuana, always prevented that unity which is strength.

After Gaseitsiwe had united the Bangwaketse he settled in Kanye, where the tribe remains to this day. In the centre of the town is a huge ash heap which is sometimes pointed to as a testimony to the many years of peace they have enjoyed since Gaseitsiwe became chief. But while there was peace at home and amity between them and other tribes, Gaseitsiwe, who was a very trusting soul, was once in great danger. On invitation he went to pay a friendly visit to his cousin, the chief of the Bahurutshe. His people did not trust that chief, and warned Gaseitsiwe that he was going into danger, and that he would be treacherously handed over to the Boers, from whom he would be lucky if he escaped with his life. But the chief would not believe it possible that a friend could act as they said. He went and was taken captive by the Boers, who bound him with thongs, and only set him free when his son, Bathoeng, had ransomed him with two thousand head of cattle.

Gaseitsiwe was a man of kindly spirit. He received and sheltered the Barolong who fled from the Boers, and against the advice of his friends he gave a part of his territory to Mokgosi, the chief of the Bamalete. It was pointed out to him that he was sowing trouble

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by his generosity, if not for himself, then for his heir. In 1882 the trouble arose. The Bamalete, now settled in the land, refused to pay tribute. Bathoeng, the heir, led a force against them, but failed to drive them out of the land on which they had been placed. In 1885 the Bangwaketse joined with the other tribes in accepting the protection of the British Government. This meant, not cessation from squabbles between the tribes, but it did mean the beginning of an era of arbitrament by negotiation instead of the appeal to spear and gun. Gaseitsiwe died in July, 1889, beloved because of his gentleness and mourned by the whole tribe.

He was succeeded by his son, Bathoeng, born in 1845, whose reign, like that of his father, was uneventful except for the visit paid by him, along with chiefs Sebele and Khama, to Queen Victoria, in 1895, when they appealed successfully against the encroachments of the Chartered Company. From this date onwards the history of the Bangwaketse is that of a vassal of the British Crown, but with extensive powers of internal administration. The new regime has worked well on the whole and the people of the Bechuanaland Protectorate have begun to realize the advantages of it, not only as regards their relationship to alien races, but also to fraternal tribes.

Bathoeng died in 1913 and was succeeded by his son, Seepapico. The history might be left here were it not that this tribe was to afford an illustration of what has proved so fruitful in breaking up the tribes,

and the cause of family murders. Bathoeng left two sons, both fairly well educated lads, the younger being of a jealous, envious and morose temperament. After Seepapico had reigned for three years he was shot while sitting in his place in the *kgotla* (place of tribal assembly) in the cool of the late afternoon, by his brother, Moeapico. In olden days this would have divided the tribe, for doubtless Moeapico was but the catspaw of a section of the tribe. But the local British administration stepped in, and after a fair trial Moeapico was found guilty of murder and executed. Thus, once again, this tribe was left with a chief who was a minor, the heir being only six years old. His great uncle was made regent, but in a very short time he died. Then the head of another branch of the royal house was placed in power, but he only lived for a few months. He was followed by yet another, but he is only a figure-head. Meanwhile the young chief named after his grandfather, Bathoeng, is growing into manhood and in a year or two will be able to sit in the *kgotla* and rule his people.

## CHAPTER XXII

### Transvaal Bechuana

#### *The Bahurutshe.*

**T**HE home of the Bahurutshe is in the Western Transvaal. All the other tribes acknowledge them to be the primary branch of the Bechuana race. It is said that their first chief was Masilo and that his younger brother, Masilwane, was the chief of the tribes that became the Basuto nation ; but that is just another way of claiming that the Basuto are a younger branch of the original tribe which all acknowledge as the stock from which both Bechuana and Basuto have sprung. The Barolong, as we have already seen, claim to have been at one time one people with the Bahurutshe. All the tribes of the Bechuanaland Protectorate acknowledge that they are branches of the trunk of which the Bahurutshe is the principal branch, because it is the eldest. As we shall presently see, each of these tribes traces the lineage of its chief from Masilo.

Legend says that the Bahurutshe came out of the cave of Looe, which is the cradle of their race, that before Looe left the cave he sent forth Matsieng to open its mouth and go out to see what kind of a



place the outside world was, and when Looe heard his report he came forth, but Matsieng returned to the innermost recesses of the cave. Masilo is said to be a direct descendant of Looe, and is the chief from whose day all records spring. He is said to have left two sons, Malope and Kwena, but some affirm that Kwena was a grandson of Masilo and a younger son of Malope. History is not all clear as to the relationship of the various chiefs of these older days, each of the tribes claiming more or less priority for its own branch. One thing is clear, the order of precedence always places the Bahurutshe at the head, followed by the Bakwena, Bamangwato and Bangwaketse, each of which is named after its first chief, Kwena, Ngwato and Ngwaketse. These last two were undoubtedly younger brothers of Mohurutshe, and Kwena was either an elder brother or uncle of both.

The Bakwena claim precedence of birth over the Bahurutshe, affirming that Kwena and not Malope was the elder son of Masilo, and they account for the precedence to-day of the Bahurutshe by the fact that at the time of "the biting of the year," as the eating of the first fruits of harvest is called, the baboons had bitten the melons before the chief had given permission for any of his people to partake of the crop. The followers of Mohurutshe asked to be granted permission to eat. Kwena replied that he had no desire to partake of the saliva of the baboons, but if the Bahurutshe section of the still united tribe

wished to do so they were at liberty to eat what the baboons had left. Now the eating of the first fruits is ordered by the precedence of the tribes, the elder branch coming first, so whether or no Mohurutshe's people were first in order of birth, at any rate, they were granted that position on that occasion and have retained it ever since.

At this time the totem was the crocodile, and the change to the baboon is said to have come about in the following way. Motebele, son of Mohurutshe, with his younger brother Motebeyane and uncle, Monagane, went out for a ring hunt. A young baboon was captured and Motebele handed it to his brother to be looked after and nourished at the cattle post. When the baboon grew up, hearing its kindred calling to each other on the hill, it fled to them and never again returned to the post. When Motebele, now chief, heard that the baboon had been allowed to get away he called his brother and all his regiment and punished them at home. This gave great cause for annoyance and the followers of the brothers fought, the forces of the younger brother defeating his brother's army. In this fight the uncle, Monagane, assisted the younger brother. Motebele then went to Sedutlane, but Motebeyane and Monagane, with their sections of the tribe, made their home at a place which they called Chwenyane, or little baboon, and to this place Motebeyane gathered all his followers. At this time they called themselves the Badiphohung, or the people of the Eland, having already changed

their totem from the crocodile to the eland. But Motebeyane gave his tribe a baboon, saying that from that time the baboon should be their totem.

Motebeyane thus became chief. He had two sons, one of whom he named Mochwene, or baboon man, the other was called Melora (ashes). Now the elder brother, Motebele, did not quietly submit to being driven from the chieftainship, but, calling in the aid of some outside tribe, either the Mantatees or the Zulus, attacked his brother. He was defeated and fled to Otse. After the death of Motebeyane, Monagane, his uncle, reigned in his stead ; and when the sons of Motebeyane had grown into manhood their uncle sent them out on a hunting expedition. Mochwene went southwards and Melora in an eastern direction, it being agreed that the signal for their return should be a column of smoke from the village to indicate that food was ready. Melora returned, but Mochwene, obsessed by the lust for venison, did not go back. He and his followers became nomads of the desert. In due time Melora succeeded his uncle, Monagane, and became the ancestor of Mohurutshe the Second, who was chief when the Batlharo hived off with Motlhwane his younger son.

At the death of Mohurutshe, Phocwane, his eldest son, became chief. He was succeeded by his son, Modisane, whose son, Pula, had five sons, the eldest of whom, Mayane, only reigned for a very short time, and was succeeded by his brother, Meno. The cause of the change in the chieftainship was, as usual,

disputes about cattle. The strife resulted in the chief fleeing from his tribe as he feared his brother would kill him. On his departure the brother assumed the chieftainship, and thus, as has so often happened in the history of the Bechuana, the power passed to a younger branch, never again to return to the elder. No dependence is to be placed on the usually accepted order of chiefs, some succeeding brothers, while in other cases sons succeeded fathers, or nephews uncles; the genealogical tree is not, therefore, a tree of actual descent, but simply the names of the various chiefs in the order in which they ruled. During the minority of an heir an uncle would act as regent, and sometimes hold the office for life, passing it on to his own branch of the family, but at other times the heir, finding himself strong enough to assert his rights, would fight to obtain his rightful position.

Meno was succeeded by his son, Thekisho, who had three sons, Tiro, Boikanyo and Ditibane. In turn, Tiro came to the chieftainship and was succeeded by his son, Moilwe, who died when his sons were still very young, and the chieftainship was placed in the hands of their great uncle, Boikanyo. But when the lads had grown to manhood they rose against the usurper and killed him. Moilwe had left four sons, Dibeco, Sebogodi, Diutluleng and Mokgattha. The tribe refused to accept the eldest as their chief, and gave the position to the second son, Sebogodi. He only lived a short time, but left behind him three sons, Meno, Motladiile and Moilwe. Their uncle,

Diutluleng, then became regent, but he was killed in war with the Makololo, and Meno, the other uncle, reigned in his place. He in turn was succeeded by Mokgatlha, the remaining uncle, and when Meno's son, Lencwe, was old enough he handed the chieftainship over to him.

About this time the Bahurutshe tribe split up into four sections, the heads of which were Lencwe, the rightful heir, and his uncles. Lencwe was killed in the war with the Boers at a place called Mosite, then the other branches of the tribe came together again at a place named Powe, where Moilwe, of the house of Sebogodi (II), was chief. Gopane succeeded to the government of Meno's section and then a struggle for the chieftainship began between the children of Gopane and Moilwe. In this struggle the Boers intervened and separated the contestants. Moilwe's people remained at Powe under the chieftainship of Ikalaheng, who lived till 1894. The section under Gopane settled at Maanwane, where the chief died in September, 1904. He was deeply mourned by his people, for he had ruled them well and wisely. He was succeeded by Mokgatlha, who was established in his position by the Transvaal Government. After the death of Mokgatlha the government came upon the shoulders of Samuel.

Speaking of the right of the Bahurutshe to precedence among the tribes, Bathoeng, the late chief of the Bangwaketse, said: "There can be no doubt that the head tribe of the Bechuana people is the

Bahurutshe, notwithstanding that Kwena was the elder brother of Malope. All the other tribes acknowledge their position, and if one of the Bahurutshe is a resident in the town of another tribe he is not subject to the chief of that town, since the chief knows that he is of the race of his superiors."

*The Bakgattha.*

The tribe known by the above name is also sometimes called the Bagakghela. Its headquarters are at Mochudi, but offshoots are to be found in parts of the Western Transvaal, and one fairly large section at Moshupa, between Kanye and Molepolole.

The Bakgattha came originally from the Eastern Transvaal, where part of the tribe, the descendants of the followers of Mosetlha, still reside in the Waterberg district of that country. This section is in all probability formed of the descendants of the elder branch of the tribe from which the many sections of the Bakgattha separated. It seems certain that, while their chief is not spoken of as the paramount chief, he is recognized, at any rate, as being the representative of the oldest branch of the tribe. No tribe has broken up to such an extent as the descendants and followers of Kgatlha. The two main divisions are those of Kgatlha and Mokopu, and the breach came about owing to the child of the chief house of Mokopu being a female. When Mokopu died this daughter was accepted by part of the tribe as his

successor, and she held the reins of government over the Bagakgahela. But the Bakgatlha section, objecting to being governed by a woman, revolted and separated, leaving the chieftainess, who was named Seepapico, to rule over the Bagakgahela alone.

The history of this tribe is very unreliable. Few traditions have come down the stream of time regarding their earlier chiefs, but, of course, there are the usual legends of great bravery and valorous deeds of some of the men of old. Apparently one great disruption took place as far back as the days of Kgahela, the younger son of Mosetlha, who became chief lord of the Bakgatlha by the voluntary payment of tribute by his followers. He was succeeded by his son, Maselelane, of whom little is known, although he is spoken of as being a great warrior. Another hero chief of the olden days was Pheto, in whose day one of the many civil wars that have done so much to break up this tribe took place. He fought, in defence of his position, against his uncle, Makgoco, who, having been sent to help the Bakwena in a fight against the Bangwaketse, had induced Legwale, chief of the Bakwena, to help him in his attempt to wrest the chieftainship from his elder brother's son. In the fight that ensued Legwale was taken prisoner, but his life was spared and he was sent back to his people with presents of cattle. After the death of Pheto the tribe was for years engaged in internecine strife. Chief after chief came to the front, but their reign was of short duration. One chief, Ditsebe, together

with a number of Pheto's sons, was killed in these engagements, till at last the rule came into the hands of Pilane, Pheto's youngest son. During his reign the Matabele of Moselekatse were raiding all over the Transvaal, and in his dread of this savage horde he fled for refuge to the hill of Mmamodinakwana. From there he moved to Mapela in the territory of the Bapedi. Moselekatse sent to him and told him to return to his home, but, not trusting the Matabele chief, he sent his younger brother, Kgotlamashwe, who, when he arrived made himself chief. This led to another civil war, and Moselekatse blamed Pilane for fighting against his brother. Pilane thereupon returned to Mapela. Now when Pilane fled to the Bapedi, the Bakgatlha were scattered like sheep without a shepherd till Molehi, another of Pheto's sons, rose up, gathered them together, and became their chief; but when the Matabele had passed on Pilane returned to his people and Molehi, unlike others of his race, handed over the government to him peaceably.

In the attacks of the Matabele the tribe was not only scattered, but many were taken prisoners, among them being Kgamanyane, the son of Pilane, but after a time he was set free and allowed to return to his people. Pilane's reign was, on the whole, a successful one. His people grew in numbers and strength. It was during his reign that the Boers came into the district of Rustenburg, and it was after the chief that they named the neighbouring hills Pilansberg. During



his lifetime there was peace between his people and the white immigrants, but on his death and the succession of Kgamanyane the voortrekkers of the white people did not get on so well with the people and so he and his people migrated into the territory of the Bakwena. They went into this territory as the result of an old treaty with the Bakwena, to whose help they had gone in the days of trouble between them and the Bangwaketse. But, notwithstanding the old agreement, the two tribes did not live amicably together, as Sechele, the Bakwena chief, wished the Bakgatlha to pay him tribute. Kgamanyane did not reign very long, but, though preparations for a struggle were made, an open rupture did not take place in his day.

On the death of Kgamanyane, his son, Lencwe, succeeded, and the fight between them took place. The result of the fight was not decisive, but, at any rate, the honours were even, and after a long time peace was made between the two tribes. To-day there are two main branches of this section of the Bakgatlha—one at Moruleng, in the Transvaal, ruled over by Ramono, a younger brother of Lencwe, who was put in authority there by the paramount chief; the other has its headquarters at Mochudi, where the chief lives.

Mention has been made of many divisions and subdivisions of the Bakgatlha. Five main divisions are recognized, each named after the headman under whose leadership they separated. These divisions are :

(1) Ba ga Mosetlha ; (2) Ba ga Kgahela ; (3) Ba ga Mmatsau ; (4) Ba ga Mocha ; and (5) Ba ga Mmaana. But all five sections are spoken of as Bakgatlha, and all have the same totem, the *kgabo*. There is a wide difference of opinion as to the totem, for the word *kgabo* stands for two different things in the language. It means a flame of fire, but it also means an ape or small monkey. To-day it is the ape that receives the reverence of the majority of the tribe, though the praises of the chiefs of very long ago speak of "the fire pot."

# MAP FOR "AMONG THE BANTU NOMADS"





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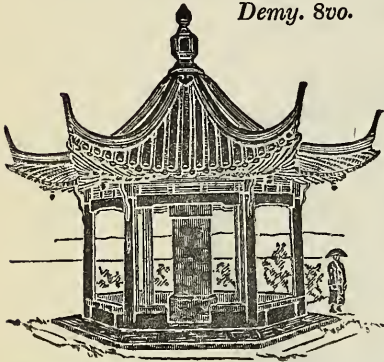
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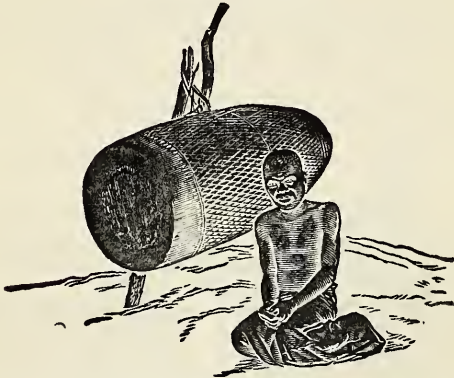
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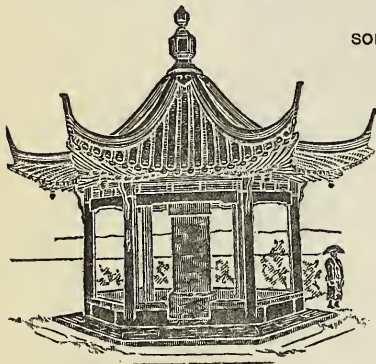
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